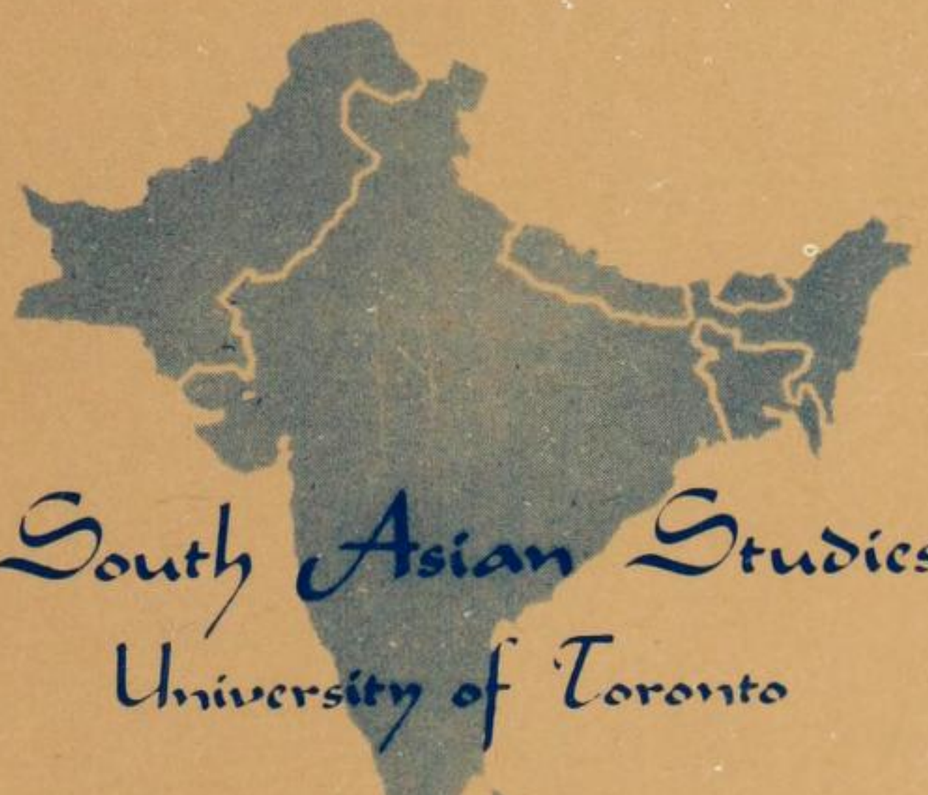
Religion and Society in Maharashtra

edited by
Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle



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Religion and Society in Maharashtra

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Religion and Society in Maharashtra

edited by
Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle

University of Toronto

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Preface

The historical process of continuity and change in the religious and cultural traditions of society in Maharashtra is the overriding theme in most of the essays in this book. The book begins with an essay analyzing the historical dynamics of vigorous folk culture—from vedic times the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history—centered on the folk deity Khaṇḍobā of Maharashtra. Combining textual analysis with field research notes, Günther Sontheimer indicates that the vedic Rudra rather than the purāṇic Śiva corresponds to Khaṇḍobā. Khaṇḍobā has his equivalents in Mailār of Karnataka and Mallaṇṇa in Andhra, and he may also be compared with the early Murukaṉ of Tamilnadu. The brahmanical purāṇic culture, although interlinked with the folk culture of Maharashtra, was unable to sap the continuing vitality and strength present in the modes of Khaṇḍobā's ritual and worship.

The influence of the Nāth *panthis* of North India on the *sants* of Maharashtra such as Jñāneśvar and Nāmdev and others has often been acknowledged. But its full implications are lost on scholars of Maharashtra because of the overt dominance of the Vaiṣṇava tenets of the present day *vārkarī bhakti* tradition. Charlotte Vaudeville urges us to view the Maharashtrian *bhakti* movement as a synthetical and historical one, incorporating within it both North and South Indian strands of *bhakti*.

The village of Ṛddhipur, the chief pilgrimage place of the Mahānubhāvs, is the object of the study by Anne Feldhaus. She plots the sacred locations associated with Guṇḍam Rāüḷ at Ṛddhipur. Rāüḷ was the *guru* of Cakradhar, the founder of the 13th century Mahānubhāva *bhakti* sect. Rāüḷ's association with Ṛddhipur is believed to be real by Mahānubhāva pilgrims and is recorded in the sectarian, hagiographical literature of the sect. The Purāṇas link Ṛddhipur with all-India traditions of pilgrimage and mythology. Beneath the specifically Mahānubhāva significance of Ṛddhipur, Feldhaus sees a substratum of concepts, practices and orientations fundamental to folk Hinduism.

John Stanley's essay focuses on two sets of centuries' old *bhakti* rituals: the promise of a Viṭhobā *bhakta* to regularly make a pilgrimage to Pandharpur; and the vow of a Khaṇḍobā *bhakta* to

regularly go to Jejuri on every "no-moon Monday" (*somavatī amāvasyā*). These ritual sets are compared and examined as expressions of two distinct *bhakti* attitudes: *sakāma bhakti* ("wish granting devotion") and *niṣkāma bhakti* ("desireless devotion"). Not finding a dichotomous distinction between these two *bhakti* attitudes, Stanley suggests that the criterion for understanding the distinction in attitudes is to be found in the concept of *navas*, a vow made to god with a promise to perform service in return for which god grants a request.

The essays of David Lorenzen, Jayant Lele, Eleanor Zelliot and Narendra Wagle deal specifically with the theme of social and religious ideologies and change in Maharashtrian society. David Lorenzen's canvas is larger in time and space to accomodate the social aspects of Śaṅkaṛa's, Tukārām's and Kabir's world visions by analyzing the hagiographical accounts of their lives. He observes that the social ideologies of the writers of the hagiographies are not necessarily identical with those of their subjects. Nevertheless, these writers do generally sound the ideological notes which produced the greatest resonance among their followers. Lorenzen indicates that Tukārām's and Kabir's hagiographers are more susceptible to social and religious attitudinal changes and endorse them, while those of Śaṅkara recognize such possibilities but are seemingly reluctant to sanction them.

Jayant Lele, choosing to analyze Jñāneśvar's and Tukārām's own writings, argues that these two *sants* articulated an all-encompassing blueprint for transcending and containing the essential core of a tradition within which their contemporaneous social order was embedded. The *sants'* penetrating critique of the brahmans' intellectual and social dominance, according to Lele, contained an impulse which was potentially revolutionary.

Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, Karmameḷā, Eknāth and Gāḍge Mahārāj, the four radical saints of Maharashtra, dating from the 13th century to the present, are the real strivers for change in the established norms and customs of Maharashtrian society. Through their writings and speeches—in the case of Gāḍge Mahārāj, we even find a tape-recorded version—the saints scathingly attacked what they construed as hypocritical and unwanted religious ideologies and practices prevalent in their societies. Eleanor Zelliot is concerned with the source of their radical ideas and the way in which their

ideas were made acceptable and the effect they have on the Maharashtrian tradition.

Narendra Wagle's essay indicates how, by using the traditional *dharmaśāstric* methods of the *śāstras*, the non-brahman upper castes of Maharashtra offered organized challenge to the ritual hegemony of the brahmans of that region. By claiming access to the vedic recitations (*vedokta*) during the performances of the sacraments and sacrifices, the Prabhu and Maratha *jātis* of early 19th century Maharashtra under the British successfully asserted their kṣatriya status. That status was being denied to them by the brahmans. The British, by proclaiming a policy of non-interference in Hindu religious matters, inadvertently helped the Prabhu's and Maratha's cause.

All the essays in this book are revised versions of papers the authors read at the first International Conference on Maharashtra: Culture and Society, held at the University of Toronto in March 1984.

The authors have chosen to use their own methods of transliterating Marathi words into romanized script. Some authors, for instance, have preferred not to use the full diacritical apparatus for place names in Maharashtra. Most have chosen to omit the final a and, sometimes, the medial a. Others have not used the final nasal sound peculiar to Marathi and which is rendered by an *anusvāra*, *ṃ*, at the end of the word. In the absence of a universally acceptable standardized practise of transliterating Marathi words, the editors have only tried to see that the authors' inner consistencies in the spellings of Marathi words are maintained in their respective essays.

The editors gratefully acknowledge grants given by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the McLean Foundation towards the cost of publication. Dr. L.W. Preston, the assistant editor of the South Asian Studies Papers series, deserves our special thanks for composing the rather difficult text and for preparing the camera-ready copy for the printers.

March 21, 1987
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Rudra and Khaṇḍobā: Continuity in Folk Religion*

by GUNTHER D. SONTHEIMER

If we compare Rudra, as a folk god with Khaṇḍobā, one of the most famous folk gods of Maharashtra, we discover a surprising degree of correspondence between these deities and their cults. By "folk god" we mean a god who is directly accessible to his followers, exists on earth "here and now", and is not preponderantly located in a distant Purāṇic heaven. Consequently we leave aside for the moment in our comparison the Śiva of the *Mahābhārata*[1] and the *Purāṇas*. It seems preferable to see in the presentation of Rudra/Śiva in these texts reflections on what was basically a folk god. For this reason, we also ignore for the moment the texts relating to the ritual and philosophy of various Śaivite "sects", e.g., of the Pāśupatas.[2] We would like to suggest that the expressions of beliefs about Rudra varied according to the different levels of the social groups which were involved in the worship and moreover, may have not only been caused by a social, but also by an ecological or spatial separation. Thus it seems difficult to assume that there was one unilinear evolution of a monolithic conception from Rudra to his "successor" Śiva, and we must rather think of mutual adjustment, incorporation and subordination of different conceptions and attitudes of different social groups. One may enlist the well-known concept of "universalization and parochialization" to describe this interaction.[3] Other concepts which could be used to describe the interaction are "inclusivism"[4] and "reflexivity"[5], but we can only draw attention to them here and shall not examine their applicability in detail.

In our opinion it seems improbable that the Śiva of the Sanskrit texts is the exclusive successor of Rudra from whom Khaṇḍobā eventually emerged as a "parochialized" cult or perhaps even as an "aberrant" version of a Purāṇic Śiva. One may with much more justification say, as we shall try to show, that there was also always the folk god called "Rudra" in the Vedic texts (among other names, e.g., Śarva, Bhava, Paśupati) who lived on in cults like that of Khaṇḍobā or the related cults of Mailāra (Karnataka) and Mallaṇṇa (Andhra). These cults existed parallel to Rudra/Śiva of the *Purāṇas* and of the Śaivaite "sects", which had their own peculiar mythology, ritual and philosophy. The Khaṇḍobā cult was linked to the scriptural "great tradition", as we see in the *Mallāri Māhātmya*[6], but this link was late, superficial and failed to fully "universalize" the folk-god Rudra-Khaṇḍobā and his cult. This link is not even fully acknowledged in the standard *Purāṇas*: the *Mallāri Māhātmya* is said to belong to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, but the text is not included in the Veṅkaṭeśvara edition of the same *Purāṇa*. Today the content of the *Māhātmya* is still hardly known to the majority of the devotees. Where it is known, the struggle of Khaṇḍobā against the *daityas* as an "*avatār* of Śaṅkar for the sake of his *bhaktas*" is emphasized, but not the myth told in the *Māhātmya*. According to the *Māhātmya* the god descended to defend Brāhmaṇs, their *āśram* and *yajña* from the depredations of Maṇi and Malla, the *daityas*.[7]

When and where the myth of the *Māhātmya* was known, it tended to be only partially accepted and was made to function within the framework of folk religion. This happened apparently also with an earlier attempt to identify Khaṇḍobā with the Brāhmaṇical-purāṇic Skanda.[8] In short, we may say that folk tradition, oral literature and folk rituals still prevail in the Khaṇḍobā cult.

Especially in the texts of the later Vedic period (the period of the *Atharvaveda, Brāhmaṇas* and the *Śrautasūtras*) we find Rudra reflected as a god who had to be integrated into the *śrauta* sacrificial system, but it seems obvious that he belonged primarily to the Vrātyas, rather than to the brāhmaṇical sacrificial priest. The picture of Rudra as portrayed by Vedic texts shows a god on the whole unaffected by later interpretations. That is, we get evidence of a god who has not yet been dynamically interpreted by Purāṇic authors, "sectarians", classical poets and philosophers.

Thus the faithful transmission of the Vedic texts has preserved for us the picture of a folk deity which was worshipped under various

names by Āryans other than those responsible for composing the *Ṛgveda*. In fact, Asko Parpola suggests that Rudra was a god especially connected with the pre-Ṛgvedic Āryans who mixed with the culture and population of the late Harappan period. He has actually identified them as the *dāsas* or *dasyus* which originally just meant "man" and not yet "slave".[9] According to Parpola the rituals of the pre-Ṛgvedic Āryans with their admixture of the religion of the late Harappan period were antithetically opposed to the Vedic *soma* sacrifice and the classical *śrauta* ritual.[10]

Parpola's thesis offers good reasons not to assume one unilinear historical development from a single Rudra to Śiva, but suggests a more complex development of several distinct parallel traditions. We also particularly agree as it is not necessary to postulate Rudra as an "outsider" in the sense that he was (primarily) a non-Āryan deity who was "reluctantly brought into the Vedic-Āryan fold."[11]

The comparison between Rudra and and the folk deity Khaṇḍobā involves reading the Vedic texts on Rudra in the context of field research in Maharashtra, and also in Andhra and Karnataka, and then the study of the cult as reflected in regional literatures. The reaction of the authors of *Māhātmyas* (e.g., the *Mallāri Māhātmya*) and of "sectarian" texts, written either in Sanskrit, but chiefly in Kannada, Telugu, and Marathi—though providing a new layer or a different way of looking at the god—are important, as they show which aspects of the folk cult were emphasized, de-emphasized, or added, rejected, ignored, or interpreted anew.

Indologists have tended to overstress one aspect in their interpretations of Rudra. For example, Arbman regarded him primarily as a god of death.[12] But if we consider, e.g., Rudra's dogs primarily as "messengers of death", connected with inauspiciousness, impurity, blood, and hell, we take the position, and remain in the sphere, of a Brāhmaṇ *śrauta* ritual expert, or of the student of the Veda whose study (*adhyāya*) may be disturbed at the sight or sound of a dog (*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* I. 10.17 *inter al.*). For the hunter or the itinerant merchant, and other followers of Rudra, as mentioned in the *Śatarudrīya* (see below), the dog has no such terrifying implications and has vital importance in their life. The hunter needs the dog for hunting, the shepherd for protecting his camp or flock, and the itinerant merchant to protect the caravan and so on. The faithful and brave dogs (often imitated by the *bhaktas* of Rudra and Khaṇḍobā, see below) are even given

memorials and are depicted as devoted to the god, as, for example, by two memorials dedicated to two dogs at Phaltan on the way to Shingnapur (Satara district). Folktales told by Dhangar shepherds emphasize the faithfulness of dogs. Khaṇḍobā's dogs are nowhere associated with Bhairava and his brahminicide, rather they are said to have come with Bāṇāī, the second wife of Khaṇḍobā and a shepherdess. It was R.N. Dandekar, following R.G. Bhandarkar who clearly pointed out Rudra's malevolent as well as benevolent features.[13] The ambivalence of gods like Rudra is a frequent and essential component in the cult of any Indian folk deity and this has been virtually ignored in Indological studies of the past.[14]

There is another curious feature which emerges if one compares Rudra with Khaṇḍobā: folk rituals in general and the rituals in the Mailār/Mallaṇṇa/Khaṇḍobā cult in particular resemble in many ways the folk elements of the Vedic *śrauta* rituals or rather the rituals which were "assimilated away"—to use the expression by Jan Heesterman—in the classical Vedic *śrauta* rituals.[15] If one observes the *jatrās* of Mailār, Mallaṇṇa or Khaṇḍobā, and if one reads, for example, the descriptions by Rāmdās of the *jatrā* at Jejuri[16], one discovers many archaic folk rituals which are mentioned in, but are eliminated from, the classical Vedic *śrauta* ritual. Heesterman has shown that the classical *śrauta* ritual "eliminated" or "assimilated away" the "preclassical" rituals based on communal celebrations, agonistic dualism, music, dance, ritual abuse and ritual copulation. It purified and individualized the "preclassical" rituals by breaking the dualistic pattern and cyclical exchange, making the *yajamāna* the centre of the ritual. The sacrifice became independent from ritual rivalry and the complementary pattern of purity and impurity. The classical *śrauta* ritual eventually became the domain of absolute purity. The *mahāvrata*, which was originally a cyclical festival and has been compared with the Dasarā festival, became a normalized *soma* ceremony, but it still preserved archaic rites, such as different kinds of contests, e.g., chariot races, dancing, singing, drumming, and ritual copulation. These rituals were the weapons of Mṛtyu, who was close to Rudra, and who, according to the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (*JB* 2, 69-70), fought a ritual battle with Prajāpati which ended in the victory of Prajāpati and the breakthrough of the classical Vedic ritual. All the incidents of the "preclassical" Vedic ritual occur, however, in the Khaṇḍobā cult and are not completely eliminated, however stylized they may have become.

We cannot compare here all the features common to Rudra and Khaṇḍobā and a few examples must suffice to illustrate the point. One of the most important texts is the *Śatarudrīya* of the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*. There are small differences in the text of the *Śatarudrīya* of the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*. Of course, references from other Vedic texts like the *Vrātyakāṇḍam* of the *Atharvaveda* (Book XV) are important. The *Śatarudrīya* is sometimes considered a description of the ubiquity, and thus the philosophical universality of Rudra. But as one sees in the folk-religious context, in addition to an emphasis on Rudra's ubiquity, the text gives a concrete and unmistakable impression of Rudra through the description of his specific, personal characteristics. These characteristics reappear in slightly different terms in the Khaṇḍobā of folk belief.

Spatial Separateness of the Followers of Rudra

Rudra is the Lord of the mountain. He wanders in the mountains. He is called *giriśanta, giritra, giriśa* (*TS* IV.5.1). In the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* (I.10.20) the mountain is specifically mentioned as the abode of Rudra. Rudra, the hunter, lives among the mountains with his wife Rudrāṇī. She plays a more vital role than the wives of the other Vedic gods.[17] Khaṇḍobā is a mountain deity, who is called Mallayya in Andhra or Mallappa in Karnataka. Etymologically the term is derived from Tamil *malai*, Kannada *male* etc. Mallayya also refers to the famous deity of Śrīśailam in Andhra which at the folk level has many similarities with Khaṇḍobā. Mallayya/Mallikārjuna is especially associated with the tribe of the Ceñcūs. Pilgrims from Maharashtra in the 12th century already called him Sirigiri [Śrīgiri] Mallayya.[18]

The close association of Khaṇḍobā with his wife while they kill the demon or go for a hunt is familiar in folk art and ritual. From the *ṚV* we already gather that the goddess Vāc stretches the bow for Rudra (*ṚV* 10.125.6). Rudra's "sister" Ambikā (considered in this context to be the autumn season) joins him on his kill (*TB* I.6.10; *MS* 1.10.20; *cf*. e.g., *Mahābhārata* 3.40.17; 40.55 [critical edition]). Near Jejuri, in the villages of Sakurdi and Murti Modhve, we find two similar, very old reliefs (presumably 13th c.) of a hunter with a Bhairava halo. He is accompanied by his wife who wears a *mukuṭa* like that of a queen. Both have bows and hunt a wild boar and deer. They are accompanied by dogs and demon-like

hosts. Today the god is called Vandev and the goddess Yogeśvarī. Apparently the god was worshipped as a hunter around Jejuri. The Somvatī Amāvāsyā festival in Jejuri still has vestiges of a hunting excursion of Khaṇḍobā. Khaṇḍobā is accompanied by his wife Mhāḷsā and *inter alios* by a host of "hunters" represented by the Dhangars with their ceremonial spears. Formerly, it is said, wild animals were actually hunted and a drop of blood was put on the *pālkhī* of the god and goddess. On this day many people worship their ancestors. It is as if the living and the dead (the *vīras* or *bhūtas*) were equally alive and united on this day. But it is made clear in the *Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya* that Jejuri is not a place for *śrāddha*, but the capital of king Mārtaṇḍa (*MV* 35.62-63). Rudra, like Khaṇḍobā is the lord of the *gaṇas* (*TS* IV.5.4e) and the lord of the *bhūtas* (*TS* IV.5.11: *bhūtānāṃ adhipati*).

Rudra is not only connected with the world of demons, but also, according to the *Hiraṇyakeśigṛhyasūtra* (I.5.16.1o), associated with serpents: he sits in a place infested by serpents, that is, we may presume, in a termite mound. The termite mound can be seen as spatially separated from the settled habitation and is, so to say, a miniature mountain in the forested area. G.H. Khare mentions[19] that Khaṇḍobā/Mailār cannot be exclusively a mountain deity because some important cult centres are not on a hill or a mountain, e.g., Adimailar in the Bellary district, where Mailār is called Maṇ-Mailār, the "Mailār made out of clay". But here Mailār manifested himself in a termite mound in which he was said to have lived with frightful serpents. In Prempur/Khanapur (near Bidar) the *mūrti* of the demon Maṇi is in the form of a huge serpent.[20]

In the Vedic *agnicayana* ritual "the head of the sacrifice" as the essence of the universe plays a big role. Originally in the preclassical ritual the "head of the sacrifice" must have been a great object of contention between rivalling parties.[21] Without going here into the intricacies of the Vedic ritual we may say than an "anthill" and the "sacrificial head" are seen as identical. At one stage Agni or the sun is worshipped in an "anthill" and he is considered to be hidden in the "anthill" as the sun discerning the world at daybreak (*TS* IV.1.2.h.k.).[22] Rudra is "identified" or "substituted" by Agni in the ritual context of the *śrauta* sacrifice. Now Khaṇḍobā in Adimailar (Karnataka) is considered to have been hidden in the termite mound from which he emerged as Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava, the sun. The termite mound, which in the Vedic ritual stands symbolically for the head of the sacrifice, is in popular legends also

the seat of the god and of gold, turmeric, and wealth in general. The association of Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava or Khaṇḍobā with gold or rather *bhaṇḍār*, turmeric powder, is well-known. The sun spending the night in the termite mound or in the underworld emerging at daybreak is also reflected in the *Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya* (28.2ff.) in the explanation of the origin of the turmeric powder: the night changes into turmeric. In an oral legend from Andhra we hear that the termite mound was the seat of the sheep (=wealth) and of Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava in the form of a dog.[23]

The Social Separateness of Some Followers of Rudra and Khaṇḍobā

The *Śat.* already mentions the "outlandish" communities which are also involved in the worship of Khaṇḍobā. Thus we have all types of robber groups and thieves (*TS* IV.5.3: *taskarānāṃ, stāyūnāṃ, paricarāyāraṇyānāṃ ...patiḥ; paricarāyāraṇyānāṃ patiḥ* means chief of those who roam about in the woodlands). But Rudra is not only the lord of thieves and robbers, the lord of the trees, and of the forest, but also of the fields: *kṣetrānāṃ pati* (*TS* IV.5.2g). He is primarily the lord of the forest people and vagrants, but he also belongs to the agriculturists. He could be invoked to protect them and is their guardian. One can compare the robber groups with the Rāmośīs or Beḍars/Beraḍs who were the traditional robbers and waylayers and have special rights in the Khaṇḍobā cult. On the one hand he is the lord of the robbers and on the other hand he is the *kṣetrapāl par excellence*. The Rāmośīs were notorious robbers of the harvest and they waylaid merchants, but at the same time they could be made watchmen of the fields etc. Close to Rudra are also the *niṣādas* (*TS* IV.5.4o) who were hunters, fishermen, robbers etc. and the *puñjiṣṭas* (*ibid.*) who were fishermen or fowlers etc. As the leader of these tribes Rudra is called *sthāpati* which is also the title of a *niṣāda* chief.[24] These tribes may be compared with the Malhār Koḷīs and Mahādev Koḷīs who were the traditional Maharashtrian hunters and fishermen leaning towards predatory activities. The goddess Bāṇāī at Jejuri is served by *pūjārīṇīs* of the Mahādev Koḷīs. We might add that in many places in Maharashtra the Koḷīs and the Gavḷīs were the first to serve a Mahādev cult before it became a holy *kṣetra* of Śiva: Mahādeva is one of Rudra's names in the Veda (*AV* XV.5.6; *MS* II.9.1).

In the *Śat.* Rudra is addressed as the best of traders, the trader *par excellence* (*TS* IV.5.2k: *vāṇija*). Khaṇḍobā/Mailār is very much also a god of the Banajigas, a traditional Liṅgāyat merchant caste. The cult of Mallaṇṇa at Odela in Karimnagar district was, for example, founded by a Banajiga. Khaṇḍobā's wife is Mhāḷsā who is supposed to be a Liṅgāyat *vāṇī* (merchant) by caste. An important trade centre between the northern and southern Deccan associated with Khaṇḍobā is Malegaon in Usmanabad district. There is also a well-attended *jatrā* in the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa* which is also called *ghoḍyācī jatrā*, because there is a considerable trade in horses, cattle, and in camels. In a folk song he is called the "Merchant of Jejuri" (*Jejurīcā vāṇī*) who loads pack-oxen (?) with sacks of turmeric powder, rice, coco-nuts, areca-nuts, and oranges, takes them to Jejuri and unloads them in the courtyard of Bāṇāī's house.[25]

Rudra's special weapon as a lord of the hunters is the bow. Bow and arrows are actually more natural to him than the *vajra*. Sometimes the *vajra* is said to part into three arrows, thus when Indra hurled his thunderbolt against Vṛtra it divided into three arrows (*TS* VI.1.4,4-5). Whether the *vajra* and the *tisṛdhanva*[26] are precursors of the *triśūla*, ancestors (also called *vīra*) are depicted with three arrows, a bow and a sword on the memorial plaques (*ṭāk*) used in the ancestor-worship of the Khaṇḍobā cult. These *vīras* look like an *imitatio dei* of Rudra/Khaṇḍobā.

In the *Śat.* Rudra is asked to loosen the string of his bow (*TS* IV.5.1.1 and o.). The bow (*jyāhnoḍa*) is also the weapon of the *vrātyas* and of the Ekavrātya, the primordial chief of the *vrātyas* mentioned in the *Vrātyakāṇḍam* of the *Atharvaveda*. The unstrung bow of Mailār plays an important role in the Dasarā festival of Devaragudda. The height of this bow is about 8 metres and it is climbed by the eldest Vaggayya of the Kuruba caste at the peak of the festival. His communion with Mailār at this moment very much reminds use of the activities of the Ekavrātya, or rather the *sthāpati* of the *vrātyas* who becomes the Ekavrātya by performing certain cosmogonic rituals. He is thereby identified with Mahādeva, Rudra and Īśāna etc. In *AV* XV.1 the bow is mentioned in the connection as a seemingly indispensable implement: "He became the Ekavrātya; he took to himself a bow, that was Indra's bow."[27] Rudra is often identified with Vāyu, the wind.[28] According to the *JUB* the Ekavrātya is Vāyu (3.IV.5.2 1-4). Now, when the eldest Kuruba climbs the bow in Devaragudda thus communicating with Mailār,

wind and rain are supposed to come to a halt and, in fact, the wind is said to be located in the god personified by the Kuruba.

The wind is often identified with the horse.[29] *Vāyu* may mean "wind" as well as "horse". To act as the horse of the god by galloping and whipping oneself is a common ritual in the Khaṇḍobā cult. The god enters the devotee in the form of wind which is called *kheḷteṃ vāreṃ* in Marathi. But *vāreṃ* is also popularly associated or confused with *vāru* which means "war-horse, steed, a charger". The *jatrās* of Mailār are therefore also called *kudureya habba*—"the festival of the horse" and the devotees performing the vow are *kudurappas*. Vāyu, along with Rudra, is mentioned as the special god of the *vrātyas*.[30] We must therefore examine the *vrātyas* more closely at this stage.

They are described as constantly wandering bands and, as Heesterman writes: "It may be that they claimed presents and hospitable accommodation under the threat of violence, either real or magical."[31] The dress and equipment of the leader of the *vrātyas*, the *sthāpati* or *gṛhapati* resemble that of Rudra: he has long hair (*AV* XV.2) and wears an *uṣṇīṣa*. He has a dark garment like Rudra (*AB* V.14), which is of black wool. He has an upper garment of black and white goat- or ramskins, a *pratoda* (goad or whip?), he wears a jewel or amulet (*maṇi*), he wears neck-ornaments or rather two according to the *AV* (XV.2) and the *BŚS* says (18.24) they are of silver and gold (*cf.* below the sun and moon stitched onto the gowns of the Vaggayyas), he also wears a *niṣka* like Rudra and carries an unstrung bow (*jyāhroḍa*). The other *vrātyas* were equipped like their leader, wearing woolen, black clothes with band fringes or ribbons, as well as a pair of girdles (*dāmani*) and sandals (*upānahau*), and black and white ramskins over their shoulder. They were accompanied by the *puṃścalī* which is usually translated as "harlot" or "dancing girl", and a bard (*māgadha*).

If we compare the habits and the outfit of the *vrātyas* with those of the Vaggayyas of Mailār and the Vāghyās of Khaṇḍobā we find some striking similarities. All Vaggayyas or Goravas, as they are also called, have peculiar long black, woollen gowns. On the back the sun and the moon are stitched in colourful designs. The borders of the gown are beset with colourful zig-zag patterns. The sun and the moon along with a dog ar also sometimes engraved on the brass begging bowls of the Vaggayyas. They also carry a *triśūla* or a *śūla* (spear), or a staff, a cowrie-necklace, a *ḍamaru* or a *ghaṇṭā*.

They may also tie ramskins around their waists. Members of a slightly different group called Gokayyas or Gorappas not only wear long black woollen overcoats, but also black bearskin caps of tremendous size. The Vaggayyas go out on begging excursions, sometimes they try to intimidate people in order to extract money from them. Some of them are known to practise black magic. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to see in the *puṃścalī* the ancestress of the *muraḷī*[32], the woman "married" to Khaṇḍobā. The Muraḷī is accompanied by a Vāghyā who is the bard of Khaṇḍobā.

The specialty of the Vaggayyas and to a lesser degree of the Vāghyās is their performance of dog imitation rites. The dog plays an important role in the Mailār/Khaṇḍobā cult. The Vāghyās accompanied the god in a former age as dogs on his hunt. But the term *vāghyā* may also be derived from Sanskrit *vyāghra* and the mixing of "tiger" and "dog" is chronic in myth, ritual and folk art.[33]

One of the earliest references to Rudra and the dogs is in the *Śat.*: here the "dog leaders", "dogs", and the "lords of dogs" are mentioned (IV.5.4 q and r). Once the Ekavrātya is addressed as "dog" in the *HGS* (2.7,2).[34] In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XII.2.IV.2.4) we find a reference to the *puruṣavyāghrāḥ*. Thus we discern a relationship between Rudra, the dogs, and the tiger. Rudra is seated on or clad in a tiger skin (*cf. Śat* IV.5 k). Like the tiger he is the Lord of the forests (*AB* VIII.6: *araṇyānāṃ patiḥ*). this we may compare with the Vāghobā cult of Maharashtra. Vāghobā ("Father Tiger") is not the Śiva of the *Purāṇas*, but of a stage preceding him. Note that the Vaggayyas and the Vāghyās carry a pouch with *bhaṇḍār* which should be preferably of tiger or deer skin.

Rudra as Paśupati is also perpetuated in the Khaṇḍobā cult. *Paśu* means primarily cattle in the *Ṛgveda*, but generally also animals that live in the air, forest and in the village (*ṚV* X.90.8). Yet Rudra is not *a priori* an animal protector like the later saints, e.g., Buddha or Cakradhara. He is after all the hunter who lives in the forest and wears the tiger skin, that is, he has killed the wild animals and assimilated their power which we may see reflected in the drop of blood of the hunted animal which is applied to the palanquin of the hunting god (see above). His unpredictability and ambivalence is also experienced by man—who is one of the five sacrificial *paśus* in the *agnicayana*— and his cattle. Whenever there is an outbreak of disease among men or cattle a sacrifice is offered to Rudra (*AV*

XI.2.26). Thus, if worshipped, he can bring blessings to his worshippers and generally looks after the welfare of men and animals (*ṚV* I.43.6). He sees to it that the inhabitants of the village are well-fed and free from disease (*ṚV* I.114.1). Though he brings death he also is a great physician (*ṚV*, e.g., II.33.4).

Khaṇḍobā is the perpetuation of Paśupati on the folk religious level. Man, tiger, dog, horse, cattle, elephant, bull and ram: all are united in the cult, for the distinction in mythology and ritual is not a sharp one between man and animal. Rāmdās expresses this in the description of the *jatrā* at Jejuri[35]:

> Elephants trumpet, camels grunt
> Horses neigh, bullocks bellow loudly
> the name [of God] ||3||

Khaṇḍobā's unpredictability is preserved in folk mythology. Like Rudra who occasionally slaughters cattle (*PB* VI.9.7-8), Khaṇḍobā slaughters the herd of sheep of Bāṇāī, the shepherdess, and only when she follows him, recognizing his magic powers, he restores the animals to life by throwing a pinch of *bhaṇḍā* over the heap of killed sheep. The healing powers of the great physician are contained in the *bhaṇḍār*. The slaughter of Bāṇāī's herd is not an isolated story. In a medieval Sanskrit work called *Vīracaritra* Mairāla is said to destroy a herd of sheep and goats.[36] According to an oral legend in Andhra Pradesh, Narasiṃha on the folk level a god clearly reminiscent of Khaṇḍobā, robs the sheep of the Vempalas until they are persuaded to worship and offer sacrifices to him.[37]

The martial aspect of Rudra, his association with the heroes is also prominent in the Vedic texts. Rudra is the brave warrior (*TS* IV.5.6m: *śūra*. *TS* IV.5.10: *tavas*). He is also called *mahāvīra* in the context of the Vedic *pravargya* ritual. Rudra is connected with the *vrātīnas*, a group similar to the *vrātyas*. They are warriors who are not *kṣatriyas*, but *yaudhas*. Rudra is the leader of various kinds of troops according to the *Śat.* and he is associated with horses and the masters of horses, the *aśvapati* (*TS* IV.5.3r) which immediately reminds us of Khaṇḍobā, as the *hayapati* (or Marathi *haybati*) and of the *śiledārs* of Maharashtra, the cavaliers who were more often than not followers of Khaṇḍobā.

Even though the bow was the most prominent weapon of Rudra, he was also a swordsman (*niṣaṅgin*: *TS* IV.5.7d)—a feature which was emphasized in the Khaṇḍobā cult.[38] Rudra, like the folk deity Khaṇḍobā, was the Lord of heroes in a context which was not yet

primarily determined by the later ethical concept of defending cows, women and Brahmans. Cattle-lifting and the sheer virtue of prowess (*vīrya, tejas, mahas, tviṣi*, etc.) were admired and the hero was admired as hero, without regard to moral considerations. On the death of a hero his surviving powers were worshipped, similarly as the herostones of the Caṅkam literature were worshipped for no ethical reason, but for fertility and gaining strength. Whereas later *vīragaḷas* implied that the heroes had reached Śiva's Purāṇic heaven, Khaṇḍobā remained the earthbound lord of the *bāvan bīr*, the Lord of the 52 *vīras* who include all possible martial ghosts and godlings. We do not gain the impression that Rudra as the Lord of the *bhūtas* is a god living in heaven; on the contrary, he is earthbound and omnipresent. Closely attached to Khaṇḍobā and his regional variants—Mallaṇṇa and Mailār—were the living heroes, the Vīrabhaṭṭas and Vīramuṣṭīs, mentioned in the 13th century Krīḍābhirāmamu, the Kañcavīras in the cult of Mailār, and the *vīras* in the Khaṇḍobā cult of whom we have records from the time of king Śāhū of Satara (18th century). The *vīras* survive in the Mhaskobā cult of Maharashtra.[39] From Andhra we have a description of how two or more devotees of Mallaṇṇa of the Goundala toddy tapper caste are tied to the crossbeam of the hookswinging pole, and, with swords and shields in their hand, make a pretence of fighting with one another.[40] All these heroes practised and still practise ritual self-mortifications, e.g., in Devaragudda, and, in earlier times, even ritual self-sacrifice. Thus we have numerous late medieval memorials of stone heads (Marathi *muṇḍkī*) in Jejuri and other places, evidence of heroes who either sacrificed their life in battle or by ritual suicide. Often these heroes were from low or untouchable castes who in this way had a chance to rise either spiritually or socially. Other memorials show the *pādukās* of Khaṇḍobā surrounded by heads of rams or heads of human beings, the *vīras*, aspiring to some kind of *sāyujyatā* ("union with God").

Reactions to "Rudra"/Mailāra in the Jain and Viraśaiva Literature

The "sectarian" reflections on Rudra/Mailāra, the folk deity, can be illustrated with references from Jain and Liṅgāyat literature in Kannada. It is interesting to observe that his status as a deity, let

alone as Śiva, was not recognized, and that he remained a demon in the eyes of his opponents.

Barring two possible exceptions Mailāra appears earlier in inscriptions and regional literature than Khaṇḍobā.[41] Kannada inscriptions dated as early as 922 A.D. tell us that women were called Mala; inscriptions from 1032 A.D. refer to men as Maila. *Maila* can mean peacock and Mailāra may be linked with Murukan whom we must ignore here though the early Caṅkam literature reflects a basic affinity between Murukan, Khaṇḍobā and Rudra. Mailāra is probably derived from *maila* and *arasa*, that is "King Maila".[42] The earliest reference to Mailāra in literature is found in the Jain work *Dharmāmṛta* of Nāyasena (1112 A.D.) who mentions the Goravas of Mailāra beating themselves in excitement (*Dharmamṛta* 3.206). In the *Samayaparikṣe* of the Jain author Brahmaśiva (*c.* 1150–60) we find an interesting piece of information: a person worshipping Mailāra is unworthy to be called a Jain, he is *kāla* (="sinful"? IV.125). Mailāra belongs to the *kṣudradevatās* like, e.g., Keṭa, Kata, Marige, Masaṇige who cannot give boons (9.128). In 9.105 we read ...in the name of deities like ...Baḷari, Bhairava, Mailāra, Masaṇi, Marabbe etc. many people sacrificed their life, but without purpose. 2.71: A person of Jain faith, who had fought and died with obstinate valour in the battle-field, later on became known as Mailāra. Brahmaśiva also seems to suggest that the worship of Mailāra was recently initiated by a certain Manevagadde Chaṭṭappa. The title and name of this person occur also in inscriptions, e.g., shortly before Brahmaśiva's time and refers to a Mahäsamanta. On the whole, Mailāra was worshipped by simple folk, heroes, officers and kings of minor dynasties. He was, however, the *kulasvāmī* of the Kākatīyas.[43]

The tradition that Mailāra was a Jain was carried on by Vīraśaiva authors and he is at times called Mallideva or Mallinātha. Apparently some common Jain folk must have worshipped him under that name. Mallinātha is also mentioned in connection with a Bhairava temple in the *Līḷācaritra* of Cakradhara. Mallikārjuna of Śrīśailam is also called Mallinātha in an inscription from Karnataka and in the *Līḷācaritra*.[44] Thus it is likely that the first inscription (1246 A.D.) in Jejuri on a Jain *mūrti* of the *yakṣa* of the *tīrthaṅkara* Mallinātha may refer to a Jain worshipping Mailār/Khaṇḍobā under the name Mallinātha.[45] The *mūrti* is actually dedicated by the Jain devotee to Kapardi, the *yakṣa* of the *tīrthaṅkara*. Kapardi as a name of Rudra already appears in the *Śat*. (*TS* IV.5.9c).

According to the Vīraśaiva literature the offering of hair and fingers was a widespread practise and was usual in the Mailār cult. The imitation of dogs by the devotees of Mailāra is frequently mentioned and also that they wore cowrie shells. Very common in the Vīraśaiva texts is the reference to an episode according to which the Vīraśaiva saint Śaṃkaradāsimayya established in a dispute that he was the true Rudra and not Mailāra. A detailed account is found in the *Śaṃkaradāsimayyapurāṇa* by Mallikārjuna. A few excerpts from the description of the dispute between the Goravas[46] and Vaggayyas/Voggas with Śaṃkaradāsimayya may be relevant in our context.[47] Dāsimayya is holding a discourse on the experience of truth before the Śivaśaraṇas at the Mailāra temple in Pimbera town, probably Pember/Prempur near Bidar. A devotee of Mailāra, Maiḷādevī, comes and brings offerings for him. She offers the rest, the *prasād*, to Dāsimayya, but he refuses it because a devotee of Śiva does not take *prasād* given to another, especially a petty deity. She asks whether Mailāra is not himself Śiva and Dāsimayya replies that he is not Śiva, but a *graha* (an evil spirit). Then they call the Goravas who come along with the *voggas* (from Sanskrit *vyāghra*—"tiger", or Kannada *oggu*—to shout unintelligibly). They had applied *kuṃkuṃ* and *gandha* on their body, had a necklace of cowries, fly-whisks of peacock feathers, umbrellas, wore a woollen gown, had *liṅgas* tied to their waist, shaven heads and a woollen cap.

The Gorava leader is enraged that their god should be an evil spirit and argues that Mailāra was no other but Śiva himself. He narrates the following story:

> While a demon, called Malla, was torturing the people in the form of a wild animal, Śiva came in the form of a hunter with his *paśupata* weapon to kill him. The four Vedas followed him in the form of four dogs and Gaṅgā in the form of Maiḷādevī.[48] After slaying the demon and wearing the garlands made of his intestines, necklaces of his teeth, robes of his skin and drinking his blood Śiva comes to a camp of shepherds. The leader of that camp bows down to Śiva, the hunter, and requests him to protect their sheep from a wolf. Śiva kills the wolf and marries the leader's daughter.[49]

Dāsimayya replies: Śiva indeed killed the demon Mallāsura. But Śiva/Mallahara is not Mailāra. Mailāra is an evil spirit. He was a warrior. He came to a Jain monastery and asked to be instructed in asceticism. He was instructed in asceticism and also given a jasmine flower (as a test?) with a magical spell to attract women. One day Mallideva saw a shepherd woman (note the similarity with the folk story of the hunting excursion of Khaṇḍobā which ends with the

marriage to Bāṇāī, the shepherdess), called Māḷi. He forgot all his ascetic observances and with the help of the jasmine flower made Māḷi elope with him. But her husband raised a loud cry and some hunters came and killed both with their arrows. They became evil spirits known by the names Māḷi and Malla.

The Goravas are naturally enraged about this story and challenged Dāsimayya to make their god work for him. Dāsimayya calls Mailāra who comes out of the temple and willingly agrees to follow Dāsimayya and carry his umbrella. The Goravas surrender to Dāsimayya and ask him to pardon them for talking nonsense, but he should know that after all the followers of Mailāra are used to barking. They request the release of Mailāra and Mailāra reluctantly returns to Pemberi. From that day they have called him Koḍeya Mailāra, "the Mailāra with the Umbrella".

Here we can see the vehement sectarian Vīraśaiva reaction to a folk deity. The folk deity was relegated to its original position of a demon or evil spirit, at the most an orderly of a saint. It was not even given the position of a Vīrabhadra who is worshipped amongst Liṅgāyats. Yet in practise we find Liṅgāyats serving as temple priests of Mailāra in Devaragudda. The Jains had a tendency to recognize him as a guardian of their *tīrthaṅkara*. Nevertheless Mailāra remained a god close to peasants, tribes of fishermen and hunters, pastoral groups, merchants, robbers, heroes—dead or alive—and of minor dynasties with ambitious kings and his special devotees were the Goravas and Vaggayyas. Even Brāhmaṇs could be found amongst his followers, observing the *vrata* of becoming a Vaggayya, if not for life, at least temporarily.[50]

Perhaps from the 14th century onwards we find the rise of folk deities. This coincides with the prophecy of Cakradhara in the *Līḷācaritra*: the great temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva decay and gods like Mairāḷ-Mailār, that is, *kṣetrapālas* rise.[51] At least one Maharashtrian saint had little respect for the worshippers of Mallāri who go to him with their *divṭyās* (Marathi=torches) to have *darśan*. He ranked "Malhāri" amongst the *bhūtas*.[52] But there were subtle variations in the reactions of the Maharashtrian saints and they cannot be dealt with here.[53] Malhāri gained "respectability" by means of a victory over an *asura*, and the full literary elaboration of this feat in the *Māhātmya* which effectively linked the god to the great tradition. The god had to transcend his own asuric form.

Malla, The Robber King

We suggest that Khaṇḍobā/Khaṇḍerāyā/Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava as the *avatār* of Śiva is to a great extent modelled on the example of Malla, the *asura* or *daitya*. Malla resembles more the original Rudra than the Purāṇic Śiva. The myth of Mallāri= "Śiva, as the enemy of Malla" is very old and has its precursor in Kṛṣṇa Mallāri defeating the two wrestlers or *mallas* Cāṇura and Muṣṭika.[54] The "destroyer of Mallayeśa" is also mentioned in one of the Ajanta inscriptions.[55] In a 14th century inscription at the Malleśvara/Mailāra temple in Ainavolu near Warangal it is said in Sanskrit and Telugu that Śiva in the form of a hunter (Śabara) saved Arjuṇa by killing the demon Malla thus acquiring the name Mallāri which in course of time became Mailāra. The goddess Māḷacī accompanied her consort as a huntress.[56] The myth is told *in extenso* in Sanskrit and Marathi without reference to Arjuna and the *Mahābhārata* in the *Mallāri Māhātmya* of which many Marathi manuscripts by different authors with small but important variants and additions exist. There are also Kannada and Telugu versions of the *Mallāri Māhātmya*. In addition there are such works as the *Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya* (1823), the *Khaṇḍerāyācī Ādi*, and the *Jayadri Māhātmya* in Marathi.

Malla may be derived from Tamil *malai*, Kannada *male*, Marathi *māḷ*= "hill" or "mountain". This is probably a folk-etymological derivation, but both the demons Maṇi and Malla are often connected with the mountains in the texts. For instance, the five sons of Malla become mountains after the defeat (*MV* 20.49). From the *MMVi* (16.26) we learn that Malla consecrated mountains as weapons against Śiva. The *daitya* Maṇi created a mountain and on it the two *daityas* built their city Maṇipūr from where they ruled over the three worlds (*MV* 8.14). The lord of the city was Mallāsura (*MV* 1.77).

The god who defeats the demon associated with the mountain is called Mallaṇṇa in Telugu, and Malaikiḻavoṉ in Tamil which is a name of Murukaṉ, i.e. the "Lord of the Mountain". The god had to defeat Cūr, the personification of the evil powers on the mountains. The mountain or the evil, dangerous spirits identified with it become the seat of the god like the Kailās is the throne of Śiva. In the *MV* (20.56) Malla becomes the throne of Śiva as Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava.

Malla may also be traced to Vedic *marya* which means a "young, strong man" and also a "stallion". The *maryas* are a people or a

sodality. The *maruts* are said to be Rudra's sons (*RV* I.61V.12; VI.66.11) or Rudra's *maryas* (*RV* I.64.2; II.33.6).[57] Old Indian *marya* has changed into *malla*.[58] The *mallas* were *vrātyas*, or, according to the *Manusmṛti* (10.22), Kṣatriya Vrātyas. They were also a guild of wrestlers or pugilists. Wrestling bouts still take place during the *jatrā* on the fullmoon day of Pauṣ at Jejuri. The chief wrestler in the villages of Karnataka often comes from the Kuruba shepherd caste which is closely connected with Mailār/Mallaṇṇa. In Devaragudda a sculpture of two wrestlers can be seen on the otherwise sparingly decorated temple wall. According to the *MV* (18.162ff., 180) Malla and Śiva wrestle for nine days and nights. "But though the *daitya* may be a highly accomplished wrestler (*parama catur malla*) he can achieve nothing against Śiva; similarly, the Kolhāṭīs can perform acrobatic feats of a high order, but how can they measure themselves with Hanumanta?" (*MV* 18.166ff.). It may be the encounter of Cāṇura and Muṣṭika which is depicted in an old relief on one of the *dīpmāḷ* in front of the temple of Jejuri, but it could also be the fight between Mallāri (Khaṇḍobā) and the demons Maṇi and Malla. We may add that Tamil *mallan* means not only "wrestler", but also "a great, important personage", Sindhi *malu* means "wrestler" as well as "brave man".

It is well-known that many dynasties in Rajasthan, Nepal, and in the Deccan were called Malla or had *malla* as a *biruda* to their name. Especially at the time when the Mallāri/ Mallaṇṇa/ Mailāra cult rose in the Deccan we find *malla* as a frequent epithet of kings, e.g., Bhujabalamalla as the epithet of the Kalacuri King Sovideva (12th century).[59] Trailokyamalla appears as an epithet of rulers, and sometimes this seems a tall claim if we see that they were subordinates of the Cālukyas of Kālyāṇa in the 11th century.[60] One may also think of the *malepar*, *malevar*, or *malapar* who were notorious hill-chiefs, robbers and raiders. The Hoysaḷas, for instance, called themselves *maleparol gaṇḍar*—"champions among the hill-chiefs". Another frequent title in Kannada inscriptions is *giridurga-malla*="the Malla of the hillforts". The parallel in folk religion is found in the name of Mallaṇṇa/Mallikārjuna in Andhra who is called Parvatāla Mallu="the Malla of the Mountain" in oral legends. He is also called Tribhuvanamalla and is said to rule over the seven hills.[61] The Hoysaḷas themselves emerged as successful brigand hill-chiefs and a number of rising dynasties seeking power had a predatory background amongst people like the Beḍars or Rāmośīs who are famous devotees of Khaṇḍobā. Not only hill-

chiefs, but at times officers of established kings, like *maṇḍaleśvaras* and *daṇḍanāyakas* raided settlements of Brāhmaṇs (*agrahāras*), lifted cattle and abducted women.[62] In comparison with the established king, the robber chief and hero had everything to gain and nothing to lose except his life. A good example of such a parallel between Malla, the demon, and a minor king who threatened the Hoysaḷas was a king and hero called Sarvajña-Khaḍgamalla= "the omniscient, strong man with the sword".[63] He belonged to the Kāḍava or Pallava race and ruled from Kañcī in the 12th century. He is described as "the master of horsemen" and had a sword painted on his banner. Malla's and Maṇi's possession of a horse and a sword is emphasized in the texts.

The robber king, the daring potential usurper of the realm by whom the established king in the center was constantly threatened, corresponds on the mythological plane to the demon king who tries to usurp the center of the world and to rule over the three worlds like Malla in the *Mallāri-Māhātmya* and the *rakṣasas* in the famous Tripura myth. While hunting in the forest Malla raids the *āśram* of the Ṛṣis (which one may compare with *agrahāras* of the Brāhmaṇs) destroys their *yajña*, takes their cows and misbehaves with their women. He is also compared with a waylayer harassing travellers (*MMRā*. 2.28: *mārgaghna*). Maṇi and Malla are frequently described as great heroes: *pratāpa śūra, pratāpa sindhū, parama vīryavān* etc.(*MV* 8.14, 17; 9, 152; 11.126, 130; 12.15ff. *cf.* 16.27 etc.). Malla, the *daitya* is called *mahāvīra* (*MM* 10.2). His followers, the *vīras*, even worship Malla, the great hunter, the chieftain, and predatory king. "For the hero the king is god", says the *MV* (16.30).

In the *MM* and other texts Śiva becomes an *avatār*, assumes the form of Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava/ Khaṇḍerāyā and kills the two *daityas*. For the sake of the *bhaktas* he remains on earth. He rules on the mountain fort of Jejuri, his capital, and is worshipped like a king (*MV* 35.60). The god had to become a king. The Yogī (or *jogaḍā* as Malla calls him contemptuously: *MMVi* 11.11) becomes a divine warrior. We read in the *MMRā* that Malla wonders: "How can he have an army? He has only a bullock and is clad in a tiger-skin". "You are poor, go to the Kailās," he advises Śiva and boastfully continues:

I have many elephants. You have only one bull to ride. I have celestial clothes, you are clad in a bloody elephant hide. Your body is adorned with serpents. My ornaments are of gold. I am anointed with sandalpaste mixed with gold. You

throw about the ashes of the funeral ground. You have the powder made from the ashes of bones. (*MMRā* 9-11)

Śiva assimilates many of the attributes and paraphernalia of the demon king, e.g., the sword and the shield, his gold which in our times have become *khoberem* (coco-nut kernels) mixed with *bhaṇḍār*. He also takes over his elephant and *rathas* . According to some the *nandī* becomes the horse, but there are suggestions that the horse along with the *rathas* and the elephants can be traced back to the demon. Rāmdās, the astute observer of the Khaṇḍobā cult, notices the apparent original separateness of the two conceptions of the god when he says: "The god is an *avatār* of Śiva. He has settled on the hill-fort (of Jejuri). One (Khaṇḍerāyā) is seated on a blue horse. The other (Śiva) is on a white bull. One (Śiva) has white ash as his ornament. The other (Khaṇḍerāyā) has turmeric powder (*bhaṇḍār*). For Rāmdās they have become one. He does not distinguish between the two."[64] Rāmdās is an objective observer of the Khaṇḍobā cult. He accepts the powers of Khaṇḍobā, the folk deity, and attributes the defeat of the *turuks* to these powers.[65] He has no difficulty in seeing in Khaṇḍobā a manifestation of Rāma, the upholder of Rāmarājya.[66] His personal belief he keeps to himself as a mental reservation: "One should be in the midst of it all and yet be aloof from it", he concludes his beautiful description of the wondrous *jatrā* of Khaṇḍobā. He does not interpret Khaṇḍobā metaphorically in terms of the "inner religion".[67]

The Common Bond Between Khaṇḍobā, The Demons, and The Bhaktas

The resolution of the conflict between god and demon has philosophical overtones. It is sophisticated, but texts like the *Mallāri Māhātmya* and the *Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya* often express what is yet vaguely felt on the folk level. For instance, the breaking of chains at the festivals of Khaṇḍobā means the fulfilling of a vow (*navas*), but it also means the breaking of worldly fetters (*bhav-baṃdhana*), as the *MV* says (34.54-55). A Vāghyā informant considers the chain an attribute or insignia (*śikhā*) of the demons. In other words, if the chain, which is also considered to be a serpent is broken in the ritual (*canpar thoḍṇeṃ*) it is a sign that the demon or the *bhakta* is freed and obtains nearness to god. A Dhangar informant said that the

breaking shows the existence and power (*sattva*) or nearness of the god. The texts repeatedly stress that Khaṇḍerāyā grants *bhukti* as well as *mukti* (e.g., *MMVi* 10.90).

The fate of Maṇi and Malla resembles the fate of the demon king Bali as described by D.D. Shulman in his *Tamil Temple Myths*.[68] Actually the *bhaktas* can associate themselves with the fate of the demons. Before the demons die, their *ahaṃkār* is dispelled, they are released from their blindness or bondage; they achieve *sāyujyatā*, that is to say the flame of life enters Khaṇḍobā (*MV* 19.78), or *sannidhi*, that is they become his *dvārapālas* or *bhaktas*. The battle against them is conceived as a sacrifice (*raṇa-yajña* or *raṇa-utsava*) instituted by Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava.

Khaṇḍobā is pleased at thebravery of the *daityas* (*MV* 16.44 etc.). The *daityas* had to be sacrificed to obtain their salvation or *mukti*. Their sacrifice—as the violent self-sacrifice of the *vīras*—is a necessary precondition for their salvation. Thus they achieve their primordial unity with Śiva and the god sheds his asuric form. Accordingly, "Yeḷkoṭi", the famous cry in the cult of Khaṇḍobā remembering the victory of Khaṇḍobā, has an ambivalent meaning: *yeḷkoṭi* are the "seven crores" of enemies whom the god defeats, but they are also the "seven crores" of *bhaktas*. Rāmdās expresses this succinctly[69]:

sāt koṭi daitya mārile|
yeḷkoṭi bhakta bolile|

He killed the seven crores of *daityas*
They are known as seven crores of *bhaktas*.

The Trend Towards "Purity" and "Respectability"

The direction which the evolution of the cult took was towards purity, away from the violent realm of death, from the life of a hunter and the predatory habits of the *daitya*. The *daitya* becomes *nirmala*.[70] But before he died and achieves *sāyujyatā* or becomes his *bhakta*—his name being absorbed in Śiva's name—Śiva grants him another boon: the god is to fulfill the wishes of those devotees who [still] practise *ugra bhakti* that is animal sacrifice (*paśuvadha*), the rite of hook-swinging (*gaḷ ṭocṇeṃ*), or piercing one's leg (*tīra jaghanīṃ ṭocūni ghetī*) (*MV* 35.53). But this kind of *bhakti* is given a low rank in the ninefold modes of *bhakti* according to the *MV* (35.46). It is called *rakṣasī bhakti*. Another way of *bhakti* is

to invoke the wind, that is Khaṇḍobā, and to diagnose the afflictions in the victim taking him on the way of *bhakti* (*MV* 35.55; *Jejurī Māhātmya* ch. 20, p. 73). This is probably a reference to the *devruṣi* who summons the god and treats afflictions. But this was branded as *piśācī bhakti* (*MV* 35.47). In this context even Rāmdās and other *bhakti* saints ranked Khaṇḍobā amongst the lower gods Vetāḷ, Kaṅkāl, Mhaisobā, Brahmā, Māyarāṇī, etc.[71] On the other hand, it is suggested that *sāttvikī bhakti* consists of feeding a Brāhman who has to be imagined to be a form of Mārtaṇḍa (*MV* 35.61 and *Jejurī Māhātmya, ibid.*).

There are more instances of the trend of purity and abstention from violence. I am not sure whether Khaṇḍobā can still effectively be invoked in black magic like Rudra (see, e.g., *ṚV* II.33.11, 14) to harm others, though, it is said, it can still be done in the case of Mhasobā. The usual answer would be in the negative: "because he is Śaṅkar".

The sacrifice of animals is still performed on a large scale during the festivals of Khaṇḍobā, but already the texts tell us that this happens on the special request of the demon (*MV* 33.5-7). It is said by informants that the sheep are offered for the nourishment of the demon as a special concession of Khaṇḍobā. In Jejuri, Dhangars now exhibit the non-vegetarian *nived* (*naivedya*), lifting it up in the direction of the god or carrying it to Bāṇāī, the shepherd-goddess. That does not mean than in remote places they may not still offer it directly to their *kulasvāmi* Khaṇḍobā. An oral legend suggests that Rāmdās contributed towards the abolition of animal sacrifices to Khaṇḍobā:

> When he came to Jejuri on his pilgrimage from Pandharpur to Alandi he enquired who lived in the fort. He was told that it was Mallāri. When he saw the blood of many sacrificial sheep flowing near the Nandī at the foot of the hill he moved on and rested in the Lavathaḷeśvar temple in the outskirts of Jejuri. Khaṇḍobā heard about the arrival of Rāmdās and wondered why Rāmdās did not come to have *darśan*. He took the form of King Śivājī seated on a blue horse and appeared before the saint. Rāmdās realised that the rider was Khaṇḍobā, went to the temple to have *darśan* and established a Māruti shrine at the entrance gate of the temple court.

Today the general answer is that animals are not sacrificed to Khaṇḍobā "because Khaṇḍobā is Śaṅkar." As the demonic Rudra who was fond of blood sacrifices and to whom one should sacrifice cattle (*PB* I.8.3; *TB* I.11.5. 8-9) was transformed into the classical Purāṇic Śiva who does not accept blood sacrifices in the "standard"

śivaliṅg temples, Khaṇḍobā is slowly being transformed into the non-vegetarian deity Śiva/Śaṅkar.

Similarly the world of heroes, of the *vīras*, who use to practise self-mortifications and even offered their head to fulfil a vow for the sake of their king, chief or god tends to belong to the past. Naturally the royal elements of the Khaṇḍobā cult are on the wane. Today even the name Khaṇḍerāyā seems to be more common in the traditional oral and written texts than in modern parlance in which the god is simply called Khaṇḍobā. Hunting is a thing of the past, and only occasionally we may, for example, see a group of Māṅgs, Rāmośīs and Marāṭhās go to the temple of Khaṇḍobā (in Pali) in order to get the blessings of the "Lord of the dogs" for themselves and their dogs before they leave for their hunt. They remind us of the "hunters" and "dog-leaders" in the *Śat.* (*TS* IV.5.4q). Khaṇḍobā's powers as a *kulsvāmi*, of granting fertility to fields, cattle, and marriages remain, however, unabated, as his festivals show. The festivals are still tumultuous, though they may have lost the grandeur which Rāmdās describes. Khaṇḍobā is still the Lord of the ancestors and of the living. As rituals die hard, one may during field work unexpectedly discover many old vestiges going as far back as the time of the Vedic Rudra.

But similarly, as in the classical Vedic *śrauta* ritual which shed its folk elements of agonistic dualism and competition and its connection with Mṛtyu and became the domain of absolute purity, the direction of the evolution was the same in the Khaṇḍobā cult. Moreover, modern and urban sensibilities run counter to "primitive" institutions like rites of animal imitation, or of the *muraḷīs*. But somewhere the trend towards ritual purity had to stop, because, just as Rudra was the god of Caṇḍālas and Brāhmaṇs alike, so Khaṇḍobā is the god of all: *neṇe varṇa-jātī-kuḷā* (*MV* 5.12). Even Mlecchas, i.e., Muslims, can be his *bhaktas* (*MV* 24.30).

Conclusions

Our comparison between Rudra and Khaṇḍobā—incomplete as it is for want of space—suggests an amazing persistence of folk religion. Though there are regionally varying aspects of the deity (like Mallaṇṇa in Andhra, Mailāra in Karnataka) and adaptations to historical factors, there was basically little change but rather variations of the same theme. Folk religion thus emerges as one of

the stable constituents of Hinduism or Indian religion. Notwithstanding its relation and interaction with other constituents of Hinduism it has to be taken in its own right and not as an adjunct to the so-called "great tradition". Taken seriously, folk religion can throw much light on other religious traditions and their texts and *vice versa*.

We have thus traced "reactions" of some of the religious traditions to this folk cult. The zealous reaction of the orthodox Jain did not prevent their admission of folk deities as *yakṣas* of their *tīrthaṅkaras*. The vehement antipathy of the Vīraśaivas to the Vrātya-like followers (the Vaggayyas and Goravas) amounted to their acceptance of the cult in practice. The *Māhātmya* of the Brāhmaṇical authors endeavoured to make the cult respectable and pure, to distinguish between the demonic and the divine, and to identify it with the Śiva/Śaṅkar of the Purāṇic heaven. Though we have largely ignored the interesting reaction of Vaiṣṇavism and the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* saints of Maharashtra to the cult of Khaṇḍobā we have noted the reaction of the ascetic Brāhmaṇ saint Rāmdās who recognized the cult as legitimate and even praised it, while condemning other aspects, especially blood-sacrifice.

ABBREVIATIONS

AV	*Atharvaveda*
BŚS	*Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra*
HGS	*Hiraṇyakeśigṛhyasūtra*
JB	*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*
JUB	*Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*
MM	*Malhāri Māhātmya* (by Siddhapāl Kesarī)
MMRā	*Mallāri Māhātmya* (by Rāmdās, "Sadāśiva's servant", 1857)
MS	*Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*
MV	*Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya*
MMVi	*Mallāri Māhātmya* (by Vināyaka, 1871)
PB	*Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*
ṚV	*Ṛgveda*
Śat.	*Śatarudrīya* (*Taittirīya Saṃhita*)
TA	*Taittirīya Araṇyaka*
TB	*Taitirīya Brāhmaṇa*
TS	*Taittirīya Saṃhitā*

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NOTES

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[1]A recent study is Jacques Scheuer, *Śiva dans le Mahābhārata* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

[2]Bhairava who plays an important role in the cult of Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Nāthas, and Śaivaite Gosāvīs, is not, for all his capacity to absorb local folk cults, basically and initially a folk deity, but a version of Rudra, primarily sponsored by Śaivaite ascetic "sects". Though Khaṇḍobā appears as Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava when he kills the demons Maṇi and Malla, it would be rash to declare Khaṇḍobā in all his aspects identical with the Bhairava of the Purāṇas or of the Śaivite "sects".

[3]McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in *Village India*, ed. McKim Marriott (Chicago, 1955), pp. 171-222.

[4]See Gerhard Oberhammer, ed. *Inklusivismus. Eine indische Denkform* (Wien, 1983). Hacker's thesis (pp. 11-28) which seems to be confined to the religious-spiritual sphere has been cautiously extended by A. Wezler to "psychologische, soziale and ähnliche Gegebenheiten" (pp. 61-91, at p. 89).

[5]A.K. Ramanujan, "Where Mirrors are Windows: towards an anthology of reflections," (unpublished ms.). Ramanujan applies his concept of "reflexivity" to the "dynamic interrelations" between texts and families of texts which form a "simultaneous order" and suggests its applicability to other aspects, as, e.g., to ritual, philosophy, eating, sociolinguistic patterns.

[6]See notes as regards the *Mallāri Māhātmya* in Sontheimer 1984:155.

[7]One of my best informants, Sakhārām Bābū Lakaḍe, who belongs to the Dhangars, the large shepherd community of Maharashtra, and who is an extremely knowledgeable devotee of Khaṇḍobā, never mentioned the *Mallāri Māhātmya*. Nor did he know of the Caṃpāṣaṣṭhī festival which is celebrated on the 6th day of the light half of the month of Mārgasīrṣa (November-December) according to the written texts, e.g., the *Mārtaṇḍa Vijaya* 31.5. Śiva became an *avatār* in the form of a *liṅg* at Prempur (near Bidar) on this day. A special *vrata* (vow) in this festival is to feed daily ten Brāhmaṇs from the first day of the month to the 6th. Caṃpāṣaṣṭhī is sacred to Skanda, and there seems

to have been an effort afoot to link Khaṇḍobā to the classical Skanda, but this link has remained very much tenuous unlike the connection between Murukan and Skanda. *Cf.* Fred W. Clothey, *The Many Faces of Muruka n* (The Hague, 1978), p. 123.

[8]Scholars, especially in Maharashtra, have for long been divided in their opinion as to whether 'Khaṇḍobā' is derived from 'Skanda'. The desire to discover a unilinear *paraṃparā* of a particular deity tracing his or her ancestry in the *Purāṇas* often becomes foiled, because one can usually argue one way or the other. All "Śaivaite" deities have similar or overlapping features or, we may say, a structural affinity. Thus certain features of Khaṇḍobā can be compared with similar ones of Skanda. However, such features may also be shared by Rudra, the folk deity. If we take Rudra, Murukan, and Khaṇḍobā *inter alios* first of all as folk deities and then proceed to inquire when and where, and how these deities were linked or identified with their versions in the *Purāṇas* many questions are resolved. The problem is ably discussed by G.H. Khare, *Mahārāṣṭrācīṃ cār daivateṃ*, (Puṇe, 1968), pp. 146 ff. who criticizes Rājvāḍe's etymology; see also Rā. Ciṃ. Ḍhere, *Khaṃḍobā* (Puṇe, 1962), pp. 25 ff.; Rā. Śaṃ Nagarakar, "Skanda. Devatāvijñānātīl ek camatkār" in *Jñāneśvar traimāsik*, varṣa 10, aṃk 4 (October 1978), pp. 45-61, at pp. 57 ff.

[9]Asko Parpola, "The Pre-Vedic Background of the Śrauta Rituals," in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal (Berkeley, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 41 ff.

[10]See also the discussion in Asko Parpola, *Arguments for an Aryan Origin of the South Indian Megaliths* (Madras, 1973), p. 34.

[11]Doris M. Srinivas has recently argued for the "insider" theory and shown *inter alia* that primary Vedic Āryan traits may belong to Rudra from the outset. She shows the importance of Rudra in the framework of the sacrificial *śrauta* system, the affinities between Rudra and Agni and the importance of Rudra as *uccheṣaṇabhāga*. See "Vedic Rudra-Śiva," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 543-56.

[12]E. Arbman, *Rudra: Untersuchungen zum altindischen Glauben und Kultus* (Uppsala, 1922), ch. 7. For a discussion of previous interpretations of Rudra see R.N. Dandekar, "Rudra in the Veda," *JUPHS* 1 (1953), 94-148 (cited as repr. in *Vedic Mythological Tracts* (Delhi, 1975), pp. 199-277).

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 203. R.N. Dandekar, "Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism," in R.N. Dandekar, ed. *Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar as an Indologist* (Poona, 1976), p. 58. Recently the "bi-polar and ambivalent" nature of Rudra was discussed by J. Bruce Long in "Rudra as and Embodiment of Divine Ambivalence in the Śatarudrīya Stotram" in *Experiencing Śiva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*, ed. Fred W. Clothey and J. Bruce Long (Delhi, 1983), pp. 103-28.

[14]Khaṇḍobā, like Rudra, protects his followers and punishes, possibly with death, his enemies and the detractors of his followers. He may send his black

dogs which are just another manifestation of the god. An incident told by a follower of Khaṇḍobā who is *devruṣī* (Sanskrit *devaṛṣī*), the "shaman" of Khaṇḍobā, summarily illustrates the ambivalent nature of the god:

Dhoṇḍibā, a Vañjārī [a caste of traditional itinerant merchants carrying grain or salt] from Pimparvadi, used to vilify the Vāruvālās. Then the people of the village said: "Viśvanāth [the *devruṣī*) is capable of solving this problem." On a Sunday he came to me. He wanted to test the existence (*sattva*) of the god. The Lord possessed me. While I was possessed [the Lord] said: "On the sixth day you [Dhoṇḍibā] will receive a blow." On this very day, in the evening a black puppy appeared. It bit him and ran away. He wanted to kill the dog, but could not catch it. Then the people of Pimparvadi asked me: "Sir, why did this happen?" I asked them: "What did the dog look like?" They said: "It was a black puppy." Then I told [Dhoṇḍibā]: "Perform the ritual of *jāgraṇ*." Now he did not have money to arrange for a *jāgraṇ*. He went to his father-in-law, but could not get money. Then he went to Jalna and he wad admitted. On the sixth day he died. Then the people realized that one should not abuse [Khaṇḍobā's] *bhaktas*.

This incident was told by a *devruṣī*, who is also a Vāghyā (for whom see below): Śrī Viśvanāth Jijobhāū Vāghe, Partud, Dt. Usmanabad. The Vāruvālās are followers of Khaṇḍobā, who, like the Kudurappas of Karnataka, enact horse imitations. They trot like horses and beat themselves with a whip (Marathi *vāsarī*). The horse is the favourite *vāhana* of Khaṇḍobā. Sunday, on which the *devruṣī* gets possessed by Khaṇḍobā is the special day of god. The "sixth" day brings to mind Caṃpāṣaṣṭhī, see note 7. *Jāgraṇ* is a night long vigil in honour of the god for which Vāghyās and Muraḷīs have to be invited, see below.

[15]Heesterman, "Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer," *WZKSO* 8 (1964), pp. 2 ff., at p. 17.

[16]Anantadās Rāmdāsī, ed., *Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā* (Puṇe, 1928), *pada* 1171. See Sontheimer 1981:1 ff., at pp 60 ff.

[17]Dandekar, "Rudra in the Veda," p. 114. In *TB* I.6.10: Ambikā is Rudra's sister.

[18]Śaṃ Go. Tuḷapuḷe, *Marāṭhī Vaṅgmayācā Itihās, khaṃḍa pahilā* (Puṇe, 1984), pp. 41 ff.

[19]*Op. cit.*, p. 152.

[20]Sontheimer 1984:159.

[21]J. Heesterman, "The Case of the Severed Head," *WZKSOA*, 11 (1967), 22-43.

[22]Heesterman, pp. 37,39.

[23]G.R. Varma, *Mailāra Deva* (Tadepalligudem: Varman Publications, 1973), p. 38.

[24]*MS* II.2.4. Wilhelm Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), S. 16. *Cf. TS* IV.52.i: *sthāpataye*.

[25] Vā. Su. Ahire (collector of the song) in Sarojinī Bābar, ed. *Ek hotā Rājā* (Bombay: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Lokasāhita, Puṣpa 10ve, 1964), pp. 50ff.

[26] A bow with three arrows. See *MS* IV.5.9 and *BŚS* 16.22; 18.24. *Cf*. Parpola, "Arguments," pp. 41ff.

[27] W.D. Whitney's translation in *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā* (Cambridge, Mass., 1905).

[28] Caland, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa in Auswahl*, Nr. 146.

[29] Sontheimer 1981:9.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *IIJ*, 6 (1962-63), pp. 6ff., at p. 11.

[32] *muraḷī* = "the flute of Kṛṣṇa". I suspect that the term is folk-etymologically derived (as so many terms in the Khaṇḍobā cult) by metathesis from Kannada *maruḷī* = "a mad woman" (Kittel, *Kannaḍa-English Dictionary*, s.v.), i.e., a god-intoxicated woman. This gains some plausibility from information by a *pūjārī* (Śrī Gopāl Tātobā Pūjārī) of Mangsuli (Belgaum district) who described *muraḷīs* as woman dedicated because of "*bhakti* and custom". He compared them to Mahādēviyakka, the famous "mad" Lingayat woman saint and devotee of Mallikārjuna who wandered wild and god-intoxicated in the wilderness till ultimately she found Mallikārjuna and lost herself. She became the "husband" of him, likethe *muraḷīs* were wedded to Khaṇḍobā in a more ritualized context. On Mahādēviyakka see A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 111 ff. The term *maruḷa* appears in one Kannaḍa *abhaṅg* attributed to Jñāneśvar (*akkā nī keḷe mātu/ katoḍalana dasega maruḷādene*). A little brother or sister tells his or her sister (*akkā*) that he or she had become mad (*maruḷādene*) after Viththala. See the discussion in Caṃdraśekhar Kapāḷe, *Sāhityasaṃved*, (Gulbarga, 1985), pp. 1-21.

[33] Sontheimer 1984:163 ff.

[34] I owe this reference to Harry Falk from his forthcoming work *Das Würfelspiel im Veda*.

[35] *Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā, pada* 1172.

[36] H. Jacobi, "Über das Vīracaritam," in Bernhard Kölver, ed., *Hermann Jacobi. Kleine Schriften*, Teil I (Wiesbaden, 1970), p. 378 (*Vīracaritra* ch. XXI). See also ch. VIII,57 (p. 400): *Mairāla iva mṛṇmayaḥ* and *cf.* above *Maṇmailāra*—"the Mailār [made of clay]." R.C. Ḍhere, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[37] Sontheimer 1985:47.

[38] *niṣaṅga* may also mean "quiver".

[39] See Sontheimer 1976:196. In Jejuri one Vir family still survives.

[40]Syed Siraj ul Hasan, *The Castes and Tribes...* (Bombay, 1920), p. 240.

[41]There is the well-known reference to Khaṇḍaka, the patron *yakṣa* of Pratiṣṭhāna according to the *Mahāmayūri Mantra*, which dates possible from the 4th century A.D. according to D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay, 1962), p. 121. For the Ajanta cave inscription see below.

[42]These and the following remarks on Jain and Vīraśaiva Kannada literature are mainly based on M. Cidanandamurty, "Kannaḍa Kāvya, śasananagaḷalli Mailāra mattu Māḷaci," *Prabuddha Karnāṭake*, 48/3 (1966), 41-62. I am grateful to Dr. Rajaram R. Hegde for help in translation.

[43]Sontheimer 1985:148.

[44]Ānaṃda Nā. Kuṃbhār in *Mahārāṣṭra-Sāhitya-Patrikā*, aṃk 227 (1983), 34–74, at p. 34. *Līḷācaritra*, ed. S.G. Tulpule (Nāgpur-Puṇeṃ, 1967), *Uttarārdha, līḷā* 384, p. 74.

[45]*Cf.* Khare, *op. cit.*, p. 89ff. *Cf.* p. 151.

[46]The "Goravas" were Śaivite ascetics according to medieval Kannada inscriptions. Perhaps the Śaivite non-brāhmaṇical "Guravs" who are priests in Khaṇḍobā temples are their successors.

[47]Ed. V.B. Halbhavi, ch. 13. The excerpts are from M. Cidanandamurty's essay cited above. See also Khare, *op. cit.*, p. 134ff.

[48]One may compare this with a description of Dattātreya in the *Līḷācaritra*, Kolte's edn. , *Uttarārdha, līḷā* 146. *Cf. Kañcippurāṇam*, (Nākaliṅkamutaḷiyār, ed.) (Madras, 1910), *Tiruvekampappātālam* 78: when Śiva changes into the form of a hunter, the four Vedas turn into his dogs (Tamil *nali*). I owe the reference to Eveline Meyer.

[49]There are some improbabilities regarding the two wives of the god. Normally the identifications are: the first wife is Maiḷādevī= Mhāḷsā= Pārvatī= Yogeśvarī. The second wife is the shepherdess= Bāṇāī= Gaṅgā.

[50]Sontheimer 1981:7.

[51]Kolte's edn., *Līḷācaritra, Uttarādha, līḷā* 436.

[52]See the *abhaṅg*, wrongly attributed to Jñāneśvar, in J.T. Molesworth, *A Marāṭhī-English Dictionary* (Poona, 1975; reprinted), p. xxvi.

[53]See G.D. Sontheimer, "Bhakti and the Khaṇḍobā Cult," paper read at the Third Conference on Early Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Leiden, December 1985 (to be published).

[54]Sontheimer 1984:157.

[55]B.C. Chabra, "The Incised Inscriptions," in G. Yazdani, ed. *Ajanta*, vol. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 121-24, p. 124, line 5:

Mallayeśa-karttānta. In line 12 *Khaṇḍe[śva]ra* (=Khaṇḍobā?) is mentioned. On paleographic grounds the inscription has been recently assigned to the late seventh or early eighth century. See Geri Hockfield Malandra, "The Date of the Ajanta Cave 27 Inscription," *WZKS*, 26 (1982), pp. 37-46.

[56]M.L.K. Murty and G.D. Sontheimer 1980:164.

[57]R.N. Dandekar, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

[58]W.B. Bollée, "The Indo-European Sodalities in Ancient India," in *ZDMG* 131 (1981). 172-91, at p. 181.

[59]See *Maharashtra State Gazetteer, History, Pt. 1. Ancient Period* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 351ff.

[60]B.R. Gopal, *Minor Dynasties of South India: Karnataka* (Madras, 1982), pp. 123ff.

[61]According to an oral version of the Mallaṇṇa myth recorded near Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh.

[62]Sontheimer 1976:29.

[63]Sontheimer 1984:158.

[64]*Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā, abhaṅg* 70.

[65]*Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā, pada* 1170.

[66]Lakṣmaṇ Rāmacandra Pāṃgārkar, *Śrīsamartha-grantha-bhāṃdār*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1978), p. 633, no. 8: [translation] ...Rāmdās says he (Khaṇḍerāv) is Rāmrāv, Rām is verily Khaṇḍerāv.

[67]*Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā, pada* 1172. For a translation of the *pada* see Sontheimer 1981:17ff.

[68](Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). pp. 14. 134. 316ff.

[69]*Śrīsamarthāṃcā Gāthā, pada* 1170.

[70]By the touch of Śiva's feet (*MM* 16.57).

[71]*Dāsbodh* 3.2.27-32.

The Shaivaite Background of Santism in Maharashtra

by CHARLOTTE VAUDEVILLE

In Maharashtra, the last quarter of the 13th century A.D. sees the beginning of new religious movements, which will give a remarkable impetus to medieval Marathi literature. However varied they may appear, these religious movements have one main source in common: an unorthodox form of Tantric yoga, preached all over Northern and central India by the so-called "Gorakhnāthīs" or "Nāth-panthī" yogīs.

The Nāths hail from the North, but their propaganda must have reached Northern Maharashtra well before the onslaught of the Muslim invaders, and their prestige, at least with the low-caste masses, seems to have been considerable. The earliest texts composed in Marathi, the *Viveka-darpaṇa* and the *Gorakha-gītā*, belong to that tradition.[1] The Nāth *paramparā* traces its origins to "Ādināth", Lord Śiva himself, and to Matsyendra—(or Mīna—)nāth, still worshipped in Nepal as a form of Avalokiteśvara.[2] The earliest "historical" guru of the text is Gorakṣanāth or Goraknāth. From Goraknāth downward, the Nāth are Shaiva, though they retain a strong link with the Buddhistic Sahajiyā Siddhas of Northern India.[3] It was the Nāths who laid the foundations of religious literature in Marathi through two main figures: Jñānadeva or "Jñāndev", hailed as the founder of the bhakti movement in Maharashtra, and Cakradhara, the founder of the Mahānubhāva sect.

Jñāndev is the author of two treatises written from a Shaiva point of view, the *Amṛtānubhava* and the *Cāngadeva-pāṣaṣṭi*, and of one

major work, the *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, a kind of paraphrase on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in which Jñāndev preaches through the mouth of Kṛṣṇa himself. The latter work, Jñāndev's masterpiece, popularily known as the *Jñāneśvarī*, was completed in 1290 A.D. Since the end of the 13th century therefore, the *Jñāneśvarī* has stood as the main source of inspiration for the "Bhāgavata or "Vaishnava" literature in Marathi.

At a later date, probably from the end of the 14th century onward, a large mass of mystical literature in middle Marathi (as compared to the old Marathi of the *Jñāneśvarī*) was composed in Southern Maharashtra by a number of predominantly low-caste poets, who are subsumed under the names of the "Sants", "Vaishnavas" or Vārakarīs". The latter term is proper to Maharashtra; it designates the devotees of the god Viṭṭhaḷa of Pāṇḍurang or Pandharpur, whose enthusiastic worshippers those "Sants" or "Vaishnavas" were. Though the Vārakarīs themselves consider Jñāndev as the head of their lineage, textual criticism does not warrant their claim. More likely, the head of the Vārakarīs' lineage was saint Nāmā or Nāmdev of Pandharpur, a *Śimpī* (cotton-printer) by caste. Nāmā probably belongs to the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century A.D.[4]

Most of the Maharashtrian mystical literature, from the 15th century onwards, has developed under the inspiration—and the spell—of Jñāndev's honeyed words on *bhakti*. As a result, the Maharashtrian so-called "Vaishnava" tradition is considered an offshoot of the great "Vedantic" tradition, and as belonging to the mainstream of Maharashtrian literature, whereas the Mahānubhāva tradition initiated by Cakradhara, in spite of its great literary achievements, remains largely "beyond the pale", an "eccentric" religion from the start, moreover suspected to have bye-and-bye imbibed not a little of Muslim views and practices.[5]

In modern times, a renewed enthusiasm of the literate, and especially of the Brahmanical, elite for the Vārakarī saint poets accentuated the tendency to view the Maharashtrian literary tradition as essentially "Orthodox" and "Vaishnava". Books were written in Hindi or in Marathi comparing the merits of the saints from Maharashtra with their compeers in Northern India or in Karnatak. This has led to some confusion and some erroneous interpretations concerning especially the Northern saint poets, headed by Kabīr, since the latter can hardly fit into this pattern.[6]

The Shaiva Background

Traditionally, however, Shaivism is the basic faith in Maharashtra, and it remains dominant all through the medieval period. In the case of the early Marathi literature, it is not the orthodox "Smārta" or "Vedantic" tradition which dominates, but the Tantric form of Shaivism inherited from the Nāth-panthī tradition—which in turn may have inherited it from former unorthodox Shaiva sects such as the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas. Even Mukundarāj, the author of the *Vivekasindhu*, the first "classical" Marathi work written on Vedantic lines, traces his spiritual lineage to Ādināth (Śiva), and claims as his own guru Raghunāth, himself a disciple of Harināth, *alias* Cakradhara, the founder of the Mahānubhāva sect. It somehow appears as if the shifting from Sanskrit to Marathi in religious literature—a bold step on the part of learned Brahmins such as Jñāndev and Mukundarāj—was determined by the will to establish a link with another non-Vedantic, yet prestigious, tradition.[7]

Jñāndev himself, "the founder of the *bhakti* movement and the doyen of Marathi poets", clearly was Shaiva by tradition, as testified by two of his works, written from a Shaiva point of view: the *Amṛtānubhava* and even more by the *Cāngadeva-paśaṣṭi*, the latter addressed to the great Tantric Yogi, Cāngadeva, in "sixty-five" verses. Besides, like Mukundarāj in the *Vivekasindhu*, Jñāndev, in the *Jñāneśvarī*, traces his lineage to Ādināth and Matsyendranāth.[8] But, in the place of "Raghunāth" and "Harināth" in the *Vivekasindhu*, in the *Jñāneśvarī* Jñāndev gives Nivṛttināth and Gahinīnāth as his own guru and grandguru.[9]

Though the *Jñāneśvarī* takes the form of a discourse on moral and spiritual matters on the pattern of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, with Kṛṣṇa as the teacher and Arjuna as the listener, the identity of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa is not clearly established in the *Jñāneśvarī* itself: the poem does not contain a single allusion to Viṣṇu-Hari legends, nor to the Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl legend. The kind of "Vaishnava bhakti" exemplified in the *Jñāneśvarī* implies no commitment to the Vaishnava faith as such: it is a preference of the heart rather than a shift of allegiance—therefore not incompatible with an Advaitic Shaiva stand.

The parallelism in the *guru-paramparā* of the two "ādi-kavi" of Marathi literature is rather striking. For both of them, the original Guru is Ādināth, Lord Śiva himself, followed by Matsyendranāth—apparently both "divine" gurus. The two divine gurus are followed by two "human" ones: Harināth and Raghunāth for Mukundarāj, Gahinīnāth and Nivṛttināth for Jñāndev. We know nothing of Raghunāth, but Harināth appears in the *Tārarahasya*, where he is third on the list of the "human" (*mānava*) Nāth gurus.[10] "Harināth" has been identified with Cakradhara himself, the founder of the Mahānubhāva sect, who again is one with Cāngadeva Rāuḷa of Paithan.[11]

"Nominal Vaishnavism"

The interpretation of the Nāth-panthī and the Vedantic traditions resulting in a form of "nominal Krishnaism" is probably anterior to both Mukundarāj and Jñāndev. By "nominal Krishnaism", we mean a tendency to transfer the role of Śiva, as supreme Lord and Guru of the universe, to Kṛṣṇa, presumed to be one with the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa, and hailed as "Śrīkṛṣṇa", "Govinda", "Keśava", "Mādhava", "Hari", or "Nārāyaṇa". This Kṛṣṇa may also be conceived as the *pūrṇa-avatāra* of Śiva himself, whom he now represents as the "human form" of the supreme lord.

In the case of the Nāth-panthī tradition in Maharashtra, this nominal shifting is suggested by a late work, the *Yogī-saṃpradāya-viṣkṛti*, giving a somewhat confused account of the incarnation of "the nine Nārāyaṇas" as "the nine Nāth". On the order of Śiva, moved with pity by the sad plight of the earth at the end of the Dvāpara yuga, the "nine Nārāyaṇas" go to Kailāsa for a briefing from Lord Śiva, and then incarnate themselves in the form of the nine Nāths. According to Dasgupta,[12] the list includes Matsyendra, Gorakṣa, Gahinī, Jvālendra, Kāriṇa-pā, Carpaṭa, Revaṇa, Bhartṛ and Gopīcandra, and "it was settled that Matsyendra would be initiated by the Lord himself (Śiva), Gorakṣa, Carpaṭa, and Revaṇa by Matsyendra, and Gahinī, by Gorakṣa". H. P. Dvivedi, however, remarks that "the list does not link Gorakṣa with any of the 'nine Nārāyaṇas'. Moreover it is said that Śiva created Gorakṣa *after* the descent of the nine Nārāyaṇas."[13] This implies that Gorakṣa himself is not simply one of the "nine Nāths", but rather that he corresponds to the "Avirhotra-Nārāyaṇa" identified in the

same passage with Nāganātha. This Nāganātha or Nāgnāth cannot be other than Lord Śiva himself, under the form of the Nāgnāth *jyotirlinga* at Auṇḍhā, a deity famous in the Maharashtrian tradition.

In the case of the Mahānubhāva tradtion, the shifting from Shaiva to Vaishnava names is even more evident. The divine pentad which stands as the pillar of the Mahānubhāva faith is known as "the five Kṛṣṇas" (*pañca-kṛṣṇa*) which includes Śrikṛṣṇa Cakravartī of the Dvāpara age, Dattātreyaprabhu of the Sahyādri, Cāngadeva Rāuḷa of Dvāravatī, Guṇḍama Rāuḷa of Ridhpur and Cāngadeva Rāuḷa, i.e. Cakradhara, of Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithan). But only the last three are historical figures.[14] The first name, Śri Kṛṣṇa Cakravartī of the Dvāpara age, clearly corresponds to the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa; the second, Dattātreya, is a mysterious figure: a great Yogi, an *avadhūta*, sometimes identified as a son of Śiva or an *avatāra* of the same or as one of the Nāths, he is now included in the "Vaishnava" devotional synthesis of the Vārakarīs of Maharashtra. Śrīkṛṣṇa and Dattātreya are the *divya-gurus* of the Mahānubhāvas, whereas the last three stand as their *mānava-gurus*.

Cāngadeva Rāuḷa of Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithan), the third of the pentad and the first of the "human" gurus of the sect, has a complicated prehistory, which suggests that he might have been the same as the "original" Cāngadeva Rāuḷa of Dvāravatī (Dvārka). Ultimately he was initiated by Govindaprabhu (the former Guṇḍama Rāuḷa of Ṛddhipur) and renamed by him "Cakradhara", an epithet of god Viṣṇu.[15]

According to recent research, Cakradhara, the founder of the Mahānubhāva sect, was none other than the "Harināth" who was Mukundarāj's grand-guru.[16] So finally we are left with only two human gurus: Cakradhara, *alias* Harināth, *alias* Cāngadeva Rāuḷa, and Govindaprabhu, *alias* Guṇḍama Rāuḷa. "Rāuḷa" refers to a very low caste of Bhairava worshippers. Clearly the founders of the Mahānubhāva sect belonged to that group and were traditionally Shaiva.[17] The more famous of the two was known as "Harināth", a name which suggests a link with the Nāth-panthī tradition.

The story about "Harināth" having founded two divergent traditions, one of Vedanta and the other of Siddhānta (i.e. Tantric Yoga)[18] may or may not be taken as "historical". But "Harināth" itself is a hybrid name, which suggests a passage from Tantric (Nāth-panthī) Shaivism to "nominal Vaishnavism". Such a

movement may have been initiated two generations before Mukundarāj, possibly in the first part of the 13th century A.D.

The Exaltation of the Divine Name

The "Vedānta" tradition, supposed to have been initiated by the same Harināth, may well refer to Jñāndev's great work, the *Jñāneśvarī*, in which the poet teaches the "Bhāgavata" ideal, through the mouth of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Yet Jñāndev proclaims that he received the very doctrine he preaches from his guru Nivṛttināth, who himself held it from Śiva:

> That teaching which has come down to us from Śankara,
> the great Guru, through the tradition of his disciples.
>
> *Jrī* XVIII.1737

Together with the exaltation of the Guru, as the Supreme Benefactor of the faithful and the main object of *bhakti*, the exaltation of the power of the divine Name is emphasised in the *Jñāneśvarī*. The fulness of the spiritual benefit to be reaped from the practice or the invocation of the "Name" (*nāma-smaraṇa*) is stressed by Jñāndev—but the poet himself seems to hesitate as to which name is the best for *japa* and *smaraṇa*. Bound to his double allegiance—Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, the Tantric or the Vedantic tradition—Jñāndev leaves the options open:

> Or else, let a single Name, be it Shaiva or Vaishnava,
> dwell in his speech: such is the 'austerity of speech'.
>
> *Jrī* XVII.223

Actually, in the *Jñāneśvarī*, the object of the heartfelt devotion, *bhakti*, centers on the Guru and the Name.[19] The merits of the saints are exalted, but the latter are not made into the object of a cult. The kind of *bhakti* expressed in the *Jñāneśvarī* is strictly on ancient *Bhāgavata* lines, made compatible with Shaiva as well as Vaishnava allegiances through the mediation of the Name, which concentrates in itself the full power of the Godhead—an idea clearly inspired by the Tantric notion of the Word as *bīja*. Emotional Vaishnavism or Krishnaism of the later medieval and modern type does not appear in the *Jñāneśvarī*.

Viṭṭhala, a Cowherd-god

In the Maharashtrian Vaishnava tradition, saint Nāmā or Nāmdev is said to be a contemporary of Jñāndev, on the ground of the *Tīrthāvalī gāthā*, probably a later text attributed to Nāmdev and narrating the long pilgrimage accomplished by the two saints in Northern India, and especially in the Punjab.[20] It was largely the work of Nāmdev and some other low-caste Maharashtrian saints to propagate devotional Vaishnava *bhakti*, centered on the cult of the god Viṭṭhaḷa or Pāṇḍurang of Pandharpur, probably from the end of the 14th century onwards. That famous icon—the object of ardent love and the inspiration for the so-called "Vārakarīs", the Pandharpur pilgrims, and for the Maharashtrian *Śūdra* masses as a whole—is originally a Kanarese deity.

The traditional cults of the low-caste people of Maharashtra, and especially the cults of the pastoral castes, center on Rudra-Śiva, Khaṇḍobā (Skandha), Bhairava and a number of local godesses.[21] These ancient cults were not abolished, but superseded, by the preaching of the *bhakti* cult centered on god Viṭṭhaḷa of Pandharpur. The cult of the Kanarese *mūrtī* of Viṭṭhaḷa, said to have been brought to Pandharpur by the merits of the mysterious saint "Puṇḍalik", is certainly older than Nāmā himself. The miraculous apparition of that deity on the bank of the Bhīma at Pandharpur, however, did not immediately result in the conversion of the population to Vaishnavism: Śiva remained the supreme deity, as testified by the most ancient temple in Pandharpur, the "Puṇḍalik temple", now half-immersed in the bed of the river: to this day "Puṇḍalik" remains a Shaiva temple, even now in charge of the low-caste Koḷī fishermen.

The original Shaiva character of the famous Viṭṭhaḷa icon itself is suggested by its bearing a Śiva-linga as its head-gear. Moreover, the akimbo position of the arms, which finds no equivalent in other Vaishnava icons, bears a striking similarity to the image of "Bīr Kuar", the cattle-god of the Ahīrs of Western Bihar. Further evidence about the identity of Viṭṭhaḷa is provided by a passage found in the *Līḷācarita*, the earliest Marathi work belonging to the Mahānubhāva sect (*ca.* 1278), which gives anecdotes on the life of Cakradhara, the founder of the sect. Replying to a question of his disciple Mahādāisā, Cakradhara states that a hero named Viṭṭhaḷa

died while protecting the cows of Pandharpur and that a memorial stone (*bhaḍakhamba*) was erected in his memory. That stone was later "accepted as its own" by the deity, which means that the deity itself was identified with it. As commented by Tulpule: "In short, the god Viṭṭhaḷa of Pandharpur is, according to Cakradhara, a deified hero-stone...It became *jāgṛta* (lit. "awake" i.e. "alive") and people started worshipping it. Its character was changed from a Shaivite hero-cult to the Vaishnava cult of the Vārakarīs. It became, so to say, a quite different god."[22]

Nāma's Initiation

One may then well ask the question: "What was Nāmdev's own tradition and what kind of 'Vaishnava bhakti' did he preach?"

According to tradition, Nāmā was originally a devotee of Sadāśiva converted to the cult of Hari. In one tradition,[23] it is said that his own guru was "Nāgnāth"—apparently belonging to the Gorakhnāthī tradition, though he may well have been identical with the Nāgnāth *jyotirlinga* at Auṇḍhā, i.e. with god Śiva himself. According to the prevalent tradition in Maharashtra, however, Nāmdev's guru was a mysterious yogī called "Visobā Khecara". R.C. Dhere accepts this tradition and traces Nāmā's *parampara* to Gorakhnāth, through Visobā Khecara, Kṛṣṇanāth, Cānga Vaṭeśvar and "Yoginī Muktāī".[24]

The line of Nāmdev with his purported guru, Visobā Khecara, is emphasized in the *Gāthā* attributed to Jñāndev.[25] Muktāī and Jñāndev send Nāmā to Aundh *Nāgnāth*, where the famous episode of the meeting of Nāmā and Visobā takes place: Nāmā finds Visobā reclining at ease within the Nāgnāth temple, with his feet negligently placed on the top of the sacred *śiva-linga*. When Nāmā expresses dismay, Visobā, through his yogic powers, shows to Nāmā the whole of the temple filled by the *śiva-linga* in order to convince his would-be disciple that Śiva is the omnipresent, all-prevading Godhead.

The name "Khecara" (literally , "one moving in the air") clearly refers to a "Siddha", a great Tantric Master endowed with magical powers. Though the name is not found in the traditional lists of Nāth-siddhas, Khecara, together with Cānga Vaṭeśvar, might well have belonged to the same tradition.[26] As to the name "Visobā", it

is apparently linked with that famous episode at Nāgnāth, and the outrageously negligent pose adopted by the great Yogī.[27]

How then did Nāmā turn into a Vaishnava *bhakta*? First he might have done so on the advice—or at least with the approval—of his guru. Secondly, he may have accepted the view that his own *iṣṭadeva*, god Viṭṭhaḷa of Pandhapur, though traditionally Shaiva, had, as a protector of cows, also assumed the personality of child-god of the pastoral castes, Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl, a deity then on the ascendency. Finally he may have found a particular sweetness in the *bhakti* and in the "Vaishnava" names of God, already attributed to the supreme Godhead by Jñāndev in the *Jñāneśvarī*, the very names on which Nāmā himself based his own *kīrtan*.[28]

The Shifting from Shaiva to Vaishnava Bhakti: the Case of Narsi Mehtā

A remarkable example of the process in which a medieval saint may shift from Shaiva to Vaishnava *bhakti* is provided by Narsī Mehtā, the first Vaishnava saint of Gujarat (1414–1480?), who may have been a contemporary of Nāmā himself. Narsī's "autobiography" only consists in eight *padas* (songs) found at the opening of his *Putrano vivāha* , which is an account of the miracles worked by Kṛṣṇa for Narsī on the occasion of the marriage of the latter's son. In the opening *pada*, the Gujarātī saint tells of his conversion to *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*: how, deeply affected by his sister-in-law's sarcasms, Narsī goes to meditate before Śiva for seven days; how Śiva grants him his own *darśan* and tells him: "Your *bhakti* rejoices me"; how Śiva places his hand on Narsī's head, purifies him from his sins and makes his "sleeping speech" wake up; how Narsī asks for a boon[29]:

> O Lord, give me something which be agreeable to You,
> easy to reach: have pity on me!
> Gopanāth then gave me the gift of Fearlessness (*abhaya*)—
> so Narsī forever keeps singing Hari's praises.

Narsī and Nāmā

In the case of Narsī, as in the case of Nāmā, Śiva is the Guru: either directly, as in the case of Narsī, or indirectly, as in the more

popular version of Nāmā's conversion, Śiva takes the initiative: to his humble devotee, he grants a boon—and this boon is a joy—the joy to sing Kṛṣṇa's praises forever. Śiva himself affranchises his *bhaktas* to make them into *Hari-bhaktas*. By singing Hari's praise, they'll sing Śiva's own praise, but in a more joyful manner, in so far as "the Name of Hari" is sweeter to the mouth than any other name.

In the Gujarati *pada* quoted above, Śiva is referred to as "Gopanāth", "Lord of the Cowherds", a name which somehow recalls the ancient name of "Paśupati", "Lord of beasts" or "cattle" attributed to Śiva. Another Shaiva name often referred to in folk-literature and attributed to several "lingas" is "Gopeśvar"[30], which has the same meaning as "Gopanāth", suggesting that Śiva, the supreme Guru, out of love for his *bhaktas*, himself has turned into an honorary Cowherd. As "Gopeśvar", Śiva is the "Lord of the Cowherds"; as "Gopīśvar", he is the "Lord of the Gopīs", the milk-maids of Braj—and he is one with Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl himself.

In Narsī's more than in Nāmā's poetry, the "Vaishnava" names of God alternate with "Shaiva" or Vedantic names, such as *Jagatguru, Jagadiś, Ātmarām* and *Parabrahman*. In the Narsī *padas* on the theme of "the greatness of the divine Names", the vocables "Hari", Kṛṣṇa" and "Rām" prevail. But Narsī's own *chāp*, (lit. "stamp", a kind of signature which corresponds to the Northern *bhaṇitā*) remains ambiguous. The formulas found in the last line of his *padas*, *Nārāyano no svāmī, Nārāyano no nātha, Nārāyano no prabhu,* "O Lord of Nārāyaṇa", may refer to Śiva as well as to Kṛṣṇa.

Among the three names which appears most frequently in Narsī's *padas*, besides "Hari" and "Kṛṣṇa", we find the name "Viṭṭhaḷa", which apparently refers to the Pandharpur deity—and may be taken as an equivalent of "Gopanāth", a title which, as we have seen, fits both Śiva and Kṛṣṇa. It is probably because Śiva-Kṛṣṇa, as the supreme Godhead, remains the true Guru of all the "Sant" poets, that the Sant poets as a whole did not name their guru. In this respect, Nāmā himself, who names Visobā as his "helper", may be an exception. None of the saint poets of his group named his guru. This is also true of the Northern Sants headed by Kabīr[31]: actually only later sectarian "Sants" acknowledge a human guru.

The Nature of "Santism"

"Sant-mat" or "Santism" is a modern word, englobing the so-called "Sant" poets of Northern India and Maharashtra—sometimes also the Vaishnava poets of Karnatak. The term has no precise definition[32]: it usually refers to early non-sectarian saint poets, who were sometimes referred to as "liberal Vaishnavas".[33] P. Chaturvedi[34] defines the word "Sant" as one who observes *satya* ("truth") or *śudha astitva* ("pure way of being"). The characteristic quality of a Sant is said to be *ekarasa*, his being entirely immersed in pure *bhakti*. The same author quotes a *sākhī* of Kabīr to give a definition of the "Sant":

> Absence of hatred and desire,
> a tender love for the Lord,
> Detachment from the pleasures of the senses,
> such are the marks of the Sant."
>
> Kabīr, *sā*. 4.24

But such a definition only refers to a moral ideal—not to the appartenance to any particular religious group. In the *Haripāṭh*, all the *bhaktas* who collectively sing the praises of Hari are called *sant*, *sādhus* or *sajjanas*.[35] As we have seen, in the Maharashtrian tradition, the "Sants" and "bhaktas" are also called Vaishnavas" and identified as "Vārakarīs", the devotees of Viṭṭhaḷa of Pandharpur. According to Ranade, the Sants are the members of the *Viṭṭhaḷa-sampradāya*: "not that the followers of the other sampradāyas are not Santas, but the followers of the Vārakarī Sampradāya are Santa *par excellence*."[36]

The "Sants" as a whole are sometimes held to be the adepts of the so-called *nirguṇī bhakti*, i.e., a *bhakti* having as its object the qualityless, invisible, all-prevading supreme Reality. The term however appears improper in so far as the Maharashtrian "Vārakarīs" are concerned, since the latter remain devoted at least to one visible *mūrti*, that of god Viṭṭhaḷa, considered as a "spontaneous manifestation" (*svarūpa*) of the Godhead. The "nirguṇī" attitude is better exemplified by the Northern Sants, especially by the first of them all, Kabīr, born a Muslim and largely influenced by the Tantric *śūnyavāda* tradition. Even so, like Nāmā himself, Kabīr and the Northern Sant poets usually refer to God using "Vaishnava" names, such as Rām, Hari, etc., though they themselves cannot be

classified as "Krishnaite" or even as "Vaishnava" poets. For the Sant tradition as a whole, and especially for the Northern Sant tradition, the most perfect name of God is the name of "Rām", which should be understood as *ātmarāma*—identical to *ātmalinga* and referring to the mysterious, all-pervading Reality, which can only be apprehended within.[37]

Convergence of the Shaiva and the Vaishnava Bhakti in Gujarat and Maharashtra

In Gujarat and Maharashtra, and later in Karnatak, we can follow, so to say, step by step, the gradual merging of the ancient Shaiva faith into Krishnaite *bhakti*, under the leadership of god Śiva himself—as if the supreme Lord could not resist the infinite charm of the "Vaishnava" *nāma-smaraṇa*, which found its perfect expression in *bhajan* and *kīrtan*. In the last instance, Lord Śiva's "conversion" may well have been brought about by his experiencing the irresistible attraction of the devotional musical performance of the humble Vārakarīs. Considered as "sensuous", music is frowned upon by the Shaiva ascetic tradition. Vaishnavism, on the contrary, opens wide the gates of both emotion and music, which enraptures the soul of the *bhaktas* and delights the Deity too.

It is that strong link with the ancient popular Shaiva tradition which gives to Nāmdev and the Maharashtrian "Sant" tradition as a whole their characteristics: in the popular cult, Viṭṭhaḷa himself is identified as Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl. Though regarded as a young boy, Viṭṭhaḷa is a rather innocent boy: the erotic element in the Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl legend, especially his dalliance with the milk-maids, is ignored. The sentiment attributed to God in the Maharashtrian tradition is essentially compassion, an infinite love and tenderness for his *bhaktas* which can only be compared to the love of a mother for her children. God himself is represented as pining for the presence of his devotees as the cow pines for her far-away calf.[38] Yet, ultimately, it is not the Viṭṭhaḷa icon which grants salvation, but the devotion to the Name of God, the invisible, all-pervading Godhead. It is that ardent devotion to the divine Name which is the rallying point of all the Sants, either Northern or Southern, This is well-exemplified in the two *sākhīs* (*dohās*) attributed to Kabīr in the *Guru-Granth* collection of the *bāṇīs* ("sayings") of the "Bhagats"

(*bhaktas*). The *Guru-Granth* introduces a brief dialogue between Nāmā, the Shimpī, and his contemporary, Trilocan[39]:

'O Nāmā, Māyā has deceived you,'
said his friend Trilocan:
'Why do you keep printing cloth
instead of meditating on Rām?'

Said Nāmā, 'O Trilocan,
with your mouth, invoke Rām,
With your hands and feet, do all your work,
keeping your soul fixed on Niranjan.'

Kabīr, *sā*. 212-213

Such an utterance, put by Kabīr in the mouth of his illustrious predecessor, Nāmā, points to the convergence of the spiritual attitudes of the Northern and Maharashtrian saint poets. Whatever their particular religious tradition, either *smārta* as in the case of Narsī, or a mixture of Tantric Shaivism and Vaishnava *bhakti*, as in the case of Nāmā, or even Muslim, as in the case of Kabīr, Dādū and other Northern poets, ultimately the Sants are seekers of the "Pure" (*niranjan*), the Absolute, a Godhead which transcends their own traditional allegiances.

This spiritual attitude tends to blur the traditional distinction between the "Shaiva" and "Vaishnava" faiths in Hinduism—or at least to make that distinction somewhat irrelevant. At the limit, the distinction is considered as purely nominal. This is the stand adopted by the Shaiva Lallā or Lāl Ded, the great woman mystic of Kashmir. Lallā sees all names of God, "either Śiva, Keśava or Jina" as equal[40]:

May He take from me, sick woman as I am,
the disease of the world—
Whether He be he, or he, or he, or he.

To some extent, such an "ecumenical" attitude, typical of the ancient "Sant" tradition, persists among non-sectarian Vaishnava poets of the 16th century A.D. A remarkable example is found in Sūrdās, the greatest of the Braj poets and an ardent exponent of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti.[41] In a well-known *pada*, Sūrdās himself proclaims the identity of Śiva and Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa:

To Hari-Hara, to Śankar, Hail, Hail!

The One makes the great Snake into his couch,
the Other wears the Snake as a necklace,
The One is a Giver of boons,
the Other removes the poison...

Sūrdās, both are the same
under various names and forms—
Different only
are those who follow them.

***Sūr-sāgar*, NPS ed., V.S. 2015,**
vol. I, p. 328, *pada* 789

NOTES

[1]About the *Viveka-darpaṇa* and the *Gorakha-gīta*, see S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marathi Literature* [CLM], p. 314 and nos. 28, 30.

[2]*Cf.* S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* [ORC], p. 198. In the Tibetan tradition, Matsyendra-nāth is identified with Lui-pā, who is generally taken to be the first among the Buddhist Siddhācāryas.

[3]About "the popular confusion of the Buddhist Siddhācāryas and the Nāth-yogins", from which "has arisen the tradition of the eighty-four Siddhas", see Dasgupta, ORC, pp. 206-210.

[4]A number of Maharashtrian scholars, including some modern scholars, accept the traditional view according to which Nāmdev and his group were the contemporaries of Jñāndev, the author of the Jñāneśvarī, therefore belonging to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D. Following Bharadvaj, Patwardan, Bhandarkar, Macnicol and some others, we do not accept the hypothesis of the contemporaneity of Jñāndev and Nāmdev: the latter can hardly be older than the mid-fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century. The matter was discussed in a previous publication: see Ch. Vaudeville, *L'Invocation, Le Haripāṭh de Dñyāndev* , (Paris: E.F.E.O., Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1969), pp. 5-8 (in French).

[5]See Tulpule, CML, p. 253, who refers to R.C. Dhere, *Musalmān Marāṭhi Santakavi*, (Poona, 1967), p. 84; see also D.V. Bharati, *Siddha-sahitya*, (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1965), pp. 325-328.

[6]A very large number of spurious *vaṇi*, "sayings", have been attrbuted to Kabīr from Rajasthan to Bengal and from Gujarat to Maharashtra, even after a partly critical edition of his words was published by P. N. Tiwari in 1969. As a result, to this day, the words of Kabīr largely remain a "free for all", in spite of recent attempts at unravelling the mystery which surrounds both his personality and his teachings. The sākhīs of Kabīr quoted in this paper are translated from the Tiwari edition of the *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, (Allahabad, 1961).

[7]It is well-known that the Nāth-siddhas always preached and wrote in the vernaculars. Their role in the early development of the Indo-Aryan literatures has not been sufficiently emphasised.

[8]About the lists of Siddhas and Nāth-yogīs, cf. Dasgupta, ORC, pp. 202-210. The Nāth-paramparā, as distinct from the "Nāth-Siddha" lists, and according to the Marathi tradition, is given on p. 208. See also H. P. Dvivedi, *Nāth-sampradāy* [NS], (Allahabad: Hindustani Akademi, 1950), pp. 24-32.

[9]Nivṛtti and Gahinī are unknown to the Nāth tradition as a whole, they belong to the Maharashtrian tradition alone. In the *Gāthā* attributed to Jñāndev in the popular tradition, Nivṛtti is called "Nivṛttidev" or "Nivṛttidās", the latter name suggesting his affiliation to the Vaishnava (Vārakarī) congregation of god

Viṭṭhaḷa's devotees. The word itself, in Tantric parlance, means "the state of repose [of the mind]" as opposed to *pravṛtti*, the activity of the mind.

[10] *Cf.* Dvivedi, NS, p. 26.

[11] *Cf.* Tulpule, CML, p. 316, n. 39.

[12] *Cf.* Dasgupta, ORC, p. 207, n. 2.

[13] *Cf.* Dvivedi, NS, pp. 24-25.

[14] *Cf.* Tulpule, CML, p. 316, n. 34.

[15] This rather confused story is resumed by Tulpule, CML, pp. 316-317.

[16] *Cf. supra* n. 11.

[17] The word *cānga* itself (meaning "good") also refers to a particular Śiva *jyotirlinga* and to Bhairava. There is every reason to believe that the historical gurus of the Mahānubhāvas belonged to the Rāuḷa caste. It is well-known that the Nāth-Siddhas as a whole, far from trying to conceal their low-caste origin, gloried in it. The name of "Bhairava" is found in the lists of the Siddhas (see ORC, p. 203, n. 1 no. 73) but not the name of Cānga; yet we do find two "Rāhulas" in the list "available in the Tibetan sources", according to Dasgupta: see ORC, p. 203, n. 3 no. 6: "Saraha" (or "Rāhula Saraha") and no. 47: "Rāhula". The latter might be the "Cānga Rāhuḷa" of the Mahānubhāva and the "Cānga Vaṭeśvara" of the Maharastrian tradition. The mystery of the "Mahāyogī" Cānga Vaṭeśvar and of his link with the Nāth-paramparā, through "Śivayoginī Muktāī", as well as the story of Visobā Khecara and the latter's link with Cānga Vaṭeśvar were investigated by R. C. Dhere in *Cakrapāṇi*, (Pune, 1977). The illustration facing p. 160 reproduces an old Hindu image of Cāngadeva together with the Tibetan representation of the Siddha Ḍombī-pā: the resemblance is striking.

[18] *Cf.* Tulpule, CML, p. 316.

[19] *Cf.* Ch. Vaudeville, "The Cult of the Divine Name in the Haripāṭh of Dṇyāndev", WZKSO, XII-XIII (1968-69), pp. 401-402.

[20] A popular biography of saints Jñāndev and Nāmdev is found included in the *Nāmdev Gāthā*, ed. T. H. Avate, (Poona, 1923), Nos. 872-1096. Its authenticity is generally considered doubtful. The most often quoted part is the *Tīrthāvalī*, relating the pilgrimage of Jñāndev and Nāmdev in Northern India. According to the *Tīrthāvalī*, both saints came back to Pandharpur. Yet the Panjabi tradition asserts that Nāmdev spent the rest of his life in Panjab and died in Ghoman, where his *samādhi* is found. Hence the problem of the "two Nāmdevs".

[21] *Cf.* G. Sontheimer, *Bīrobā, Mhaskobā und Khaṇḍobā, Ursprung, Geschichte und Umwelt von pastoralen Gottheiten in Mahārāśṭra*, (Wiesbaden, 1976).

[22] *Cf.* S. G. Tulpule, "The Origin of Viṭṭhaḷa: a new interpretation", repr. from *Annals of the Bhandharkar Research Institute* (Diamond Jubilee Volume), pp. 1009-1015. Tulpule quotes G. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā* (Poona, 1960), and G. Sontheimer (in collaboration with Dr. Settar), *Memorial Stones of India* (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1978).

[23] *Cf.* W.B. Patwardhan, *Wilson Philological Lectures*, III, pp. 52-53; also Vaudeville, *op. cit. Haripāṭh*, p. 58, n. 1.

[24] *Cf.* R.C. Dhere, *Cakrapāṇī* (Pune: Vishvakarma Sahitya, 1977), pp. 69 ff., the *parampará* of Visobā Khecara according to the *Śilpaśāstra* and p. 144, the *Yoginī Muktabāīcī paramparā*. In the latter, Visobā Khecara is linked to the Nāth paramparā through Kṛṣṇanāth, Cānga Vaṭeśvar and Muktāī, who herself is linked to Gorakṣanāth.

[25] In the Jñāndev *Gāthā*, from *abh.* 1334 onwards, the meeting of the four elders, Nivṛtti, Jñāndev, Sopāndev, and Muktāī, with the poor Shimpī Nāmdev in Pandharpur is narrated. Though a fervent "Haribhakta", Nāmdev cannot be admitted into the group since, says Muktāī, "there is no sanctity without a guru" (*guruviṇa santapaṇa āhe koṭhe*) (ed. T. H. Avate, *op. cit.*, no. 1341). In a long *abhanga*, Jñāndev celebrates the greatness of the *Satguru* and exhorts Nāmā to the practice of *satguruseva*, since there is "no mukti without a guru." Nāmdev asks about the guru he should seek and Jñāndev sends him to "Visobā Khecara".

[26] *Cf. supra* n. 24. In the later Vārakarī tradition as found in the Jñāndev *Gāthā* (*Pandharītīl kālā*, pp. 128 ff.) "Khecara" is mentioned several times, as playing the cowherd "Kāḷā" festival in Pandharpur along with Nivṛtti, Jñāndev,and Sopāndev (Nos. 24.6; 27.6; 28.4; 29.4 *et passim*) which suggests that the great Yogi "Khecara" himself is a devotee of the god Viṭṭhaḷa of Pandharpur. Yet the name "Visobā" is not given in connection of the Kāḷā episode and the "Khecara" remains somewhat anonymous.

[27] *viṣṇẽ* means "to rest", "to lie at ease". "Visobā" might well be a nickname, which could approximately be translated as "Relax-Baba".

[28] "Rāma, Hari, Viṣṇu, Rāmakṛṣṇa, Govinda, Keśava, Mādhava, Nārāyaṇa, Narahari, Gopāla, Viṭṭhaḷa". The last three are only found in the JD *Gāthā* (*Nāmāmālā*, ed. Avate, op. cit., Nos. 405-423). Jñāndev in the *Gāthā* and Nāmdev seem to have a preference for the name of Hari. In the *Haripāṭh*, attributed to Jñāndev, the name of "Hari" is said to be "Śiva's own mantra":

hari hari hari! ha mantra śivācā

Haripāṭh, 14.3

[29] *Cf.* F. Mallison, "Notes on the Biography of Narasimha Mehta", in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Research Institute* , vol. 55, Poona, (1974), pp. 189-201: "The conversion of Narasimha Mehtā by Śiva", pp. 191-192. We are grateful to Dr. Francoise Mallison for providing us with detailed information of Narasimha Mehta and the literature about him.

[30]"Gopeśvar" in Vrindaban, the holy city of the Gauḍīya Vaishnavas in the Braj area, is one of the four great Śiva-lingas of Braj. The linga is worshipped in the morning as Gopeśvar, in the traditional Shaiva manner. In the evening, Śiva becomes "Gopīśvar": the linga is draped in feminine attire, in order to allow Śiva to join in the mysterious *rasa-līlā*, supposed to be re-enacted nearby during the night by Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs.

[31]A saint named Rāmānand was attributed as Guru to Kabīr and to some other Northern Sants in the *Bhakta-māl* of Nābhājī (*ca.* 1600); a later commentary on the *Bhakta-māl* by Priyadās (1712) narrates the legendary biography of Kabīr, including the story of his "initiation" by Rāmānand in Sant literature: nothing definite is known about his time. Rāmānand was never claimed by Kabīr himself—or by any of his followers—as his guru.

[32]An attempt was made by the author at delineating the characteristics of *Sant-mat* or "Santism": see Ch. Vaudeville, "Sant-mat: Santism as the universal path to sanctity", in K. Schomer and W. H. McLeod, eds., *The Sant Tradition of India* (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies, in press).

[33]Curiously, the term "Sant" is not used to refer to the Shaiva Bhaktas. The reason may be that, in late medieval and modern India, the "Shaiva bhaktas" are mostly sectarian, as the *Vīraśaivas* of Karnatak. The latter exclude the worship of any deity besides Śiva, therefore excluding the worship of Kṛṣṇa, whereas the Maharashtrian Sants as a whole include Śiva-worship in their practice.

[34]P. Chaturvedi, *Uttarī bharat me sant-paramparā* (Prayag: Bharati Bhandar), 1950, pp. 3-9.

[35]*Cf.* Vaudeville, *Haripāṭh*, p. 58.

[36]*Cf.* R. D. Ranade, *Mysticism in Maharashtra* (Poona, 1933), p. 42.

[37]On *rāma* and *ātmarāma* in the Jñāneśvarī, *cf.* Vaudeville, *Haripāṭh*, pp. 62-65.

[38]In the *Tiruvāśagam*, the Tamil Shaivite poet Māṇikka Vāśagar (14th *c.* A.D.) already speaks of his heart which "unceasingly melts" for his Lord and compares his longing for God Śiva to the longing of "the cow for her calf". The Maharashtrian tradition reverses the roles: the Lord Himself pines for the presence of his bhaktas as they do for him. Already in the *Jrī* XII. 11, Jñāndev addresses the Guru, or the Guru's grace, as "Mother" (*ambe*).

[39]In the Tantric Buddhist tradition, which is that of the Sahajiyā Siddhas and the Dharma cult of Bengal, *niraṇjana*, lit. "the stainless one", is said to be of the nature and form of the void like the sky; *cf.* Dasgupta, ORC, p. 283. The word is commonly used in the Nāth-panthī tradition to refer to the ultimate reality, which can only be apprehended within. *Niraṇjan* is a typically "Nirguṇī" word.

[40]*Lallā Vakyāni or the Wise Sayings of Lālded, a Mystic Poetess of Ancient Kashmir*, Eng. trans. by G. Grierson and Dr. Barnett (London, 1920), *pada* 22,

p. 10; Lallā refers to her guru, whom she does not name, as the divine "Gurunāth", which probably refers to Śiva himself.

[41]Sūrdās is classified as a Krishnaite poet, not as a "Sant". Yet the *Guru-Granth* compiled by Bhāī Bhanno contains one hymn composed by him in the rāg "Sārang". This hymn was copied, and then erased, in the Kartarpur version of the *Guru-Granth*. The subject of the poem is the necessity for the Sants to keep away from the company of evil-doers, a theme well in keeping with the ethical principles upheld by the Sant tradition. The reason for the erasure of this poem in the Kartarpur Granth (now in use as the standard version) is unknown.

Niṣkāma and Sakāma Bhakti: Pandharpur and Jejuri*

by JOHN M. STANLEY

INTRODUCTION

Maharashtrian culture distinguishes sharply between two distinct kinds of *bhakti* attitudes: *sakāma bhakti* (wish granting devotion), and *niṣkāma bhakti* (desireless or "surrendering" devotion). This distinction between attitudes is not the same as the distinction between levels of *bhakti* (though that imperfect taxonomy is somewhat used to accomodate this distinction, usually by invidiously assigning *sakāma bhakti* to one of the lowest levels and *niṣkāma bhakti* to the higher levels of *bhakti*. Nor does it correspond to the distinction between various moods of *bhakti*, for most of the traditional mood distinctions can be drawn within both *sakāma* and *niṣkāma bhakti*. Nor is it, as some have argued, simply a matter of intensity or purity of motive, for field observations indicate that *sakāma bhakti* can be just as intense and pure of motive as *niṣkāma bhakti*. The basic distinction is one of attitude and expectation.

In *niṣkāma bhakti* the attitude is one of surrendering in joy and devotion and there is no expectation of anything in return from the god beyond the acceptance of the *bhakti* gift. The promise of the Vārkarī "always to go to Viṭhobā" at Pandharpur, for example, is made as an unconditional promise, not a conditional vow. Vārkarīs claim that they go to Viṭhobā out of love only, not desire; they are seeking, they say, only the opportunity to express their *bhakti* and to experience the sheer joy of "the going". They expect nothing in

return.[1] *Sakāma bhakti* is no less intense and the attitude is no less one of giving to the god, but the giving is not desireless giving. On the contrary, the expectation of the return (or"giving back") from the god of a specific gift, or the granting of a specific request, is the principle identifying marker of *sakāma bhakti*. Indeed a key concept in understanding the difference in *bhakti* attitudes is the concept of *navas* (vow). In the performance of *sakāma bhakti* the devotee makes a *navas* to the god to demonstrate the intensity of his *bhakti*. Sometimes the vows are to perform simple rituals of devotion, such as going on a certain day to take *darśana* or performing a pilgrimage. Occasionally the vows are more extreme, involving various forms of self torture. The assumption is that the god will not refuse any request if a sufficient intensity of *bhakti* is demonstrated by the vow.

The *navas* concept (or possibly the abuse of it) seems also to be the principal cause of the low esteem that *sakāma bhakti* has both within the Marathi cultural elite and among Western scholars. The consensus seems to be clear: *sakāma bhakti* in general and the Khaṇḍobā cult in particular obviously represent a low form" of *bhakti*. It is "heathen", "vulgar", "primitive", "ugly", and "sub-human". Often it is alleged that it is not really *bhakti* at all. A Mahānubhāva monk in Phaltan once said to me, "Khaṇḍobā *bhakti* is not really *bhakti*, not true *bhakti*. It is *bhūt bhakti* (devotion to a ghost). Those *bhaktas* think they are possessed by their god. They are possessed. But he is a *bhūt*. Ha! It is *badha*. Ha! Khaṇḍobā is a *bhūt*" [taped interview]. And, as Günther Sontheimer has pointed out in his paper in this volume, both *bagāḍ* (the peculiar form of *sakāma bhakti* expressed by making a vow to perform some act of self mutilation) and *aṅgāt yeṇe* (possession by a god) were considered instances of *piśācī bhakti* or *rākṣasī bhakti* (possession by a demon), even within the Khaṇḍobā tradition itself.

Sakāma Bhakti: Disparagement and Hints of Praise

The reputation that *sakāma bhakti* is an inferior form of *bhakti* and that the Khaṇḍobā cult as the premier example of that inferior form of devotion is well documented in Marathi culture. For example, several of the poet saints write disapprovingly of *sakāma bhakti* practices and explicty cite worship of Khaṇḍobā as an unfavourable alternative to the *niṣkāma bhakti* addressed to Viṭhobā

of Pandharpur. Thus Ekanāth writes a satirical *johār*, *Gāthā* 3891, in which he makes disparaging reference to those *Vārkarīs* who turn away from their chosen god (Viṭhobā) and return to the practice of making cultic acts of devotion to their family god (Khaṇḍobā) simply because they fear that their family god is angry with them:

> They put down the *gopī-candra* and pick up their *bhaṇḍār*.
> They offer *bharit roḍgā* and shout "Yeḷkoṭ, Yeḷkoṭ!"

And Tukārām, in a brief *abhaṅga* contrasts the intensity of his true devotion to Viṭhobā to the shallow *bhakti* of the followers of *sakāma bhakti* cults[2]:

> Lacking the guile
> Of a mass hypnotizer
> I merely extol your name
> And sing your praise
> ***
> No high priest no seer
> No necromancer
> No exorcist
> No witchdoctor
> ***
> There's no voodoo about Tukā
> Tukā is like
> None of these
> Hell-begotten lunatics

Moreover, The Marathi language contains a number of idioms expressing disdain for Khaṇḍobā worship as an inferior form of *bhakti*.[3] *Khaṇḍerāv karṇe* (to make a Khaṇḍobā out of someone) means to inflate with false praise, to set someone up as a little god like Khaṇḍobā on his horse. *Aṭharā* (or *soḷā*) *guṇāṃcā Khaṇḍobā* (Khaṇḍobā of the eighteen or sixteen qualities) is used as a derisive term referring to someone with seventeen or eighteen different ways to trick you, or, by extension, to someone with tricky or cheating characteristics or numerous vices. *Khaṇḍobācā kutrā* (Khaṇḍobā's dog) is an idiom used to refer to a person who, although despicable, is protected by someone in high place, and so honoured—like Khaṇḍobā's dogs. *Yeḷkoṭ hoṇe* (to go to Yeḷkoṭ) is an idiom meaning to be ruined, or to come to ruin. It reflects the practice followed by many devotees in the Khaṇḍobā cult of crying *Yeḷkoṭ Yeḷkoṭ* (one of the power giving names of Khaṇḍobā) when they are in trouble.

In addition to these figures of speech that have essentially become idioms in Marathi, there is a Marathi proverb that seems to make the same point:

Ādi hotā vāghyā tyācā jālā pāgyā
Mūḷ svabhāva jana tyācā yeḷkoṭ rāhinā.

A rough translation would be:

> There once was a *vāghyā* who became *pāgyā* (a leader of a troop of cavalry),but his original nature remained so strong that he always shouted "Yeḷkoṭ"

The point of the proverb (as it has been interpreted by the cultural elite) seems to be that even if you elevate a person of low origin to high status, his original nature will remain unchanged. An English parallel would be, "A leopard will never change its spots." S.G. Tulpule thinks that the implication is that whenever the cavalry officer found himself in trouble, he would rely on the ritual shouting of Khaṇḍobā's name rather than on military skill.[4]

This same attitude—that *sakāma bhakti* is an inferior form of bhakti—is reflected in the ritual practices of some of the Vārkarīs and other devotees of Viṭhobā on their way to Pandharpur. One group of Vārkarīs I interviewed in 1983 made it clear that *sakāma bhakti* never plays any part in their pilgrimage to Pandharpur, though they offer it to Khaṇḍobā when they stop at Jejuri en route.[5] "We give *sakāma bhakti* to Khaṇḍobā only," commented one Viṭhobā *bhakti* interviewed at Jejuri. "We usually stop here to pay back any *navas*. Viṭhobā does not accepy *navas*. For Viṭhobā we do the *vārī*. Here we pay back *navas*" [taped interview]. Though the informant claimed he was a Vārkarī, when asked if a Vārkarī could really give *navas* to Khaṇḍobā, he replied, "Oh, yes. Some of us do—but not the most serious Vārkarīs. They do the *vārī* only."

It is clear that there is some disparagement of *sakāma bhakti* in the Marathi today. It is also clear that there are some biases reflected in many of these accounts and that *sakāma bhakti* is not universally disparaged in the culture as the predominant Western interpretations would have us believe. These biases seem to be of two kinds: (a) British, whether or not informed by the attitudes of the Christian missionaries; and (b) intellectual Hindu, whether or not informed by Brahmin sentiments.

The British bias against *sakāma bhakti* is largely responsible for the general Western ignorance of *sakāma bhakti*. British observers

of Hindu *bhakti* in the nineteenth century Deccan—both scholarly and casual—were inclined to be sympathetically tolerant of the "beautiful" or "selfless" or "single minded" (some would say "almost Christian") devotion of the Mahānubhāvas and Vārkarīs while pouring out their scorn and derision of *sakāma* practices.

Examples of the British bias specifically against Khaṇḍobā *bhakti* can be seen in the notes appended by Fraser and Marathe in their edition of the *Poems of Tukaram*.[6] On page 407 of Volume I they refer to "Malhari" as "a name of Khaṇḍobā as victor over Malla, a local king of the Deccan. The name may also be applied to Krishna as victor over the gymnasts of Kansa called Mallan." Certainly nothing could be further from Tukārām's mind. There is no conceivable way that such a reading could work poetically. The poem is set in a Malhārī temple and the concept of the poem is that Tukā himself has become a *vāghyā*. The poem has nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa and the gymnasts of Kansa. It is only Fraser's assumption that Tukārām could not possibly be addressing the poem to Khaṇḍobā, a god of *sakāma bhakti*, that leads him to this conclusion. The second example is the equally implausible note appended to the definition of *vāghyā* in Volume II, page 435, to the effect that although Tukārām "speaks in a language praising Khaṇḍobā, it is constructed so that it would apply to Krishna." Other examples abound.

But it is not only the British who edit and interpret genuine praise of Khaṇḍobā *bhakta* pejoratively. Lines of poems are changed even within the transmission of Marathi literature to qualify and explain away praise for *sakāma bhakti*. For example, an original version of a song addressed to Khaṇḍobā by Rāmdās is as follows[7]:

Sitting on a blue horse
He is throwing out *bhaṇḍār*.
The sword is in his hand
He strikes at the demons.
How many chains give way?
How many stocks are broken in two?
How many hooks are fixed into the body
Repaying *navas* ?
Pleased with his devotees,
Khaṇḍobā gives them fortune and riches.
Dās says:
In how many ways does the god fulfill their *navas*?

There is an altered ending to the poem, however, which is more popularly known:

> What is said about the devotees
> Who do not fulfill their vows?

The changing of the last line may well be an example of a cultured antipathy, either on the part of Rāmdās himself or one of his followers to the *bagāḍ* rituals mentioned in the poem finding an occasion to mitigate the apparent praise that Ramdas has given the practice of paying *navas* to Khaṇḍobā in the first part of the poem.

Still Rāmdās' genuine praise in the first part of the poem for the intensity of the devotion to Khaṇḍobā, even through the *bagāḍ* ritual of hook swinging, is undeniable, as is his praise for Khaṇḍobā *bhakti* in another poem:

> God Khaṇḍobā, avatār of Śiva
> Has settled on the fort (Gaḍ-koṭ, Jejuri).
> One (Khaṇḍobā) is on a blue horse
> One (Śiva) on a white bull
> One (Śiva) wears white ash
> One (Khaṇḍobā) has *bhaṇḍār*.
> There is no discriminating
> Between the two.

Here again, the high regard Rāmdās has for the devotion of Khaṇḍobā *bhaktas* is clear. Nor is he alone. Both Tukārām and Eknāth write *abhaṅgas* or *bhārūḍe* in the person of a *vāghyā* and *muraḷī*. In the case of Eknāth it is possible that the *abhaṅgas* (at least three of them) are addressed as a *bhakti* offering to Khaṇḍobā himself. At the very least the devotional rituals of the *vāghyā* and *muraḷī* are used as symbols of the highest stages of *bhakti*—in one case even of *ātmanivedan*. Thus an Eknāth *bhārūḍe*:

vāghyā

aham vāghā soham vāghā Premnagare vārī
sāvadh hoūnī bhajanī lāgā dev karā kaivārī
Malhārīcī vārī māḷyhā Malhārīcī vārī
icchā muraḷīs pāhū nakā paḍel tar narakdvārī
bodh budhalī jñān divaṭī ujaḷā mahādvārī
ātmanivedan bharit roḍgā nivaṭilā haroharī
Eka Janārdanī dhanya Khaṇḍerāv tyāvarī kuñcā varī

Vāghyā

I am what I am: a *vāghyā* bound for Prempur,
begging for alms.
Take care! Sing songs for my god; make him your friend.
Alms for Malhārī! Alms for my Malhārī!
No, No! Don't look with desire at the *muraḷī*
or you will fall at Hell's door.
Rather, at the great door, pour from your *budhalī*
the oil of enlightenment on the lamp of knowledge,
And let each one cook in his basket the cooked offering
(*bharit roḍgā*) of self-surrender (*ātmanivedan*).
Fulfilled, Ekā Janārdana, as his offering,
waves the fan over Khaṇḍerāv.

And Tukaram's *anant jugācā*, incidentally one of Ranade's own favorite *abhaṅgas*, makes the *vāghyās* ritual imitation of a dog the principle metaphor in the poem of ecstatic devotion:

yā devāceṃ bharitāṃ vareṃ / aṅgī premāceṃ phepareṃ
gurguru karī veḍe cāreṃ / Tukā bhuṃkāvilā

Fulfilled with the ecstacy of this god
My body is convulsed in a fit of love
See! Tukā is made to growl madly like a dog
and bark out his devotion.

There seems to be, then, clear evidence of appreciation of *sakāma bhakti* and praise for some of its forms—even some of its extreme forms—by several of Marathi culture's greatest proponents of *bhakti*. It seems reasonable to conclude that a good deal of the disparagement of *sakāma* forms of *bhakti* may well have been overemphasized due to biases both British and Indian.

Niṣkāma and Sakāma Bhakti Compared

The Vārkarī's Promise

The premier instance of *niṣkāma bhakti* is the promise of the Vārkarī to "always go to Viṭhobā."[8] The promise is variously interpreted. Some say it means to go to Pandharpur every year, some say twice a year. Some say it must include a vegetarian vow, regular prayers, and other ritual actions; some say "the going" to Viṭhobā is sufficient in itself. The term *Vārkarī* means one who makes a pilgrimage.[9] By most definitions, however, just making a pilgrimage is not a sufficient condition to become a Vārkarī. N.B.

Langde, president of the Vārkarī Mahāmaṇḍal, makes the following distinctions. There are four levels of intensity among the Vārkarīs: (1) there are those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi once a year—always to Pandharpur in the month of Aṣāḍh and usually to Alandi in the month of Kārtik, though some will go to Alandi during another month and they could also go to any one of the other *pālkhī* locations. There are from 75,000 to 100,000 Vārkarīs at this level. (2) Secondly, there are those who go both to Pandharpur and Alandi two times a year. These number about 7,000. (3) Thirdly, there are those who go both to Pandharpur and Alandi four times a year, numbering about 1,000. (4) Fourthly, there are those who go to Pandharpur and Alandi every month. These are called Mahinemāha Vārkarīs. They number about 600 people and they are considered the heart and soul of the *vārī*. They are the most highly respected of all the Vārkarīs. Their numbers are growing, especially among the educated.[10]

Navas

The *niṣkāma bhakti* promise of the Vārkarī to "always go to Viṭhobā" is paralleled in *sakāma bhakti* cults by the *navas*. A *navas* is more than just a promise or a vow. It is spoken of, both in literature and in interviews as a relationship. There is an action on the god's part. A *navas* is spoken of as being received by a god and being "given" or "fulfilled" by a god. Rāmdās speaks of Khaṇḍobā fulfilling a *navas* in the song cited above.

On the *bhakta's* part a *navas* is spoken of as being "paid" or "made" or "offered". It is spoken of as "paid" usually if it is given in advance of the fulfillment and "repaid" or "paid back" if it is offered after the wish has been granted. There is no indication in the attitude of my informants of any difference between a prepaid *navas* and a repaid one beyond the obvious temporal difference. The assumption seems to be that if a *navas* relationship exists between a *bhakta* and his god, the time of payment doesn't matter. It is assumed that the *bhakta* will "owe" his side of the bargain even if the wish is not fulfilled for some time. The alternate reading of the Rāmdās *abhaṅga* cited above implies that there are *bhaktas* who do not pay their *navas* and that that is normally considered a very serious failing.

In comparison to the *niṣkāma* promise of the Vārkarī, I offer three instances of *sakāma navas* from the Khaṇḍobā cult. The first is the vow of a*vāghyā* to "always go" to Jejuri on *Somavatī Amāvasyā*. The second is a vow to perform *daṇḍavat* (a pilgrimage made by successive prostrations) on a particular *vijay daśamī*. The third is a vow to commission a *jāgaraṇ* (an all night singing and dancing ritual) on some particular day.

The Somavatī Navas

I choose this particular *navas* as the first comparison to the Vārkarī promise precisely because it is so similar in structure. Not only is it a vow to go to a particular place at a particular time—in this case to Jejuri (the special place of the god Khaṇḍobā) on *Somavatī Amāvasyā* (a no-moon Monday),[11] there is also the same sense of varying intensity in the promise. Some make a *navas* to go to Jejuri on one particular no-moon Monday (usually the next one); some vow to go once each year; some vow to go every *Somavatī Amāvasyā*. There is, however, a sentiment, which is growing in popularity, that once one makes a vow to go to Khaṇḍobā on one no-moon Monday, one should repeat the visit—the more regularly, the better. The story of Umājī Nāīk is told as a charter of this sentiment. Nāīk, a Rāmośī rebel famed for his raids against the British, vowed to go to Khaṇḍobā regularily on no-moon Mondays if Khaṇḍobā would give him special strength for his resistance against the British. He even practiced a particular form of *bagāḍ*, opening his bicep muscles with a knife and pouring bhandar into the wound. So long as he kept his regular visits to Khaṇḍobā, Umājī Nāīk was given strength by Khaṇḍobā to escape from all the traps the British set for him. The first day after he failed to visit Jejuri on a no-moon Monday, he was captured and hung.

While it is good for any *bhakta* who has made a *navas* at Jejuri on every *Somavatī Amāvasyā*, it is especially important for a particular subset of *bhaktas—viz.*, the *aṅgāt ālelī*, those who have the capacity to be possessed by Khaṇḍobā. Indeed most *aṅgāt ālelī* interviewed indicated that no matter how unpredictable the visit of the god was, a no-moon Monday was the one time he was almost certain to come. Hence most of the *aṅgāt ālelī* will never miss a *Somavatī Amāvasyā* at Jejuri. It would seem that, though not as sophisticated in their taxonomy as the Alandi Vārkarīs, the Khaṇḍobā *bhaktas* going to Jejuri on the no-moon Monday have a

similar notion of increasing intensity of *navas*. And, although I would not argue that the intensity of their devotion approaches that of the Mahinemāha Vārkarī, the *aṅgāt āleli* in the Khaṇḍobā cult comprise the core of special ritual functionaries who are the spiritual center of a great deal of the no-moon Monday ritual observances at Jejuri[12] in the same way that the Mahinemaha Vārkarīs are the spiritual center of the Pandharpur *vārī*.

A Khaṇḍobā *bhakta* desiring to fulfill his *somavatī navas* will arrive in Jejuri early in the morning of the auspicious day. He will make his way to the Karha river, bathe, and fill his water jug with the holy water. He will then walk back through the village, take *darśan* of Khaṇḍobā at the main shrine on a hilltop overlooking the village, and proceed to another Khaṇḍobā temple (thought to be the place where the god made his original appearance on earth) some four and one-half miles further up a rocky ridge. He will take care along the way to annoint with the water he is carrying from the Karha river all the small wayside shrines, giving special attention to those of Banubāī and Hegaḍī Pradhān.[13] He will take *darśan* of Khaṇḍobā at the hilltop shrine and then return to the lower shrine for the afternoon procession (in which the images of Khaṇḍobā and his wife Mhāḷsā[14] will be carried to the river to be bathed), join the procession on its way to the river, and finally, at the culmination of the procession, throw himself into the river exactly at the moment that the images are bathed. As one informant put it, he will try to do this every no-moon Monday, doing everything in his power never to miss a single occasion.

There are a number of other rituals observed by most *bhaktas* on this day, but the procession to the river for the bathing of the god and the goddess is the center of the ritual complex.[15] For those *bhaktas* fulfilling *navas*, it is the final mark of the completion of their vows. Nearly all of the other rituals on this day involve some test to show how much of Khaṇḍobā's power has been infused into his *bhaktas* by their *navas*. For example, a ritual tug-of-war over the palanquin carrying the gods in the procession to the river measures the power infused into two rival caste groups, and several chain breaking tests performed during the procession measure the power infused individually by Khaṇḍobā into his *bhaktas*. The most important test of the day, however, has to do with a special group of Khaṇḍobā *bhaktas* that form the "spiritual center" of those who are fulfilling a *somavatī navas*: the test of *aṅgāt yeṇe* (possession of a person by a god). One informant going through

this ritual later described his experience of the test. For the last two no-moon Mondays he said he had felt Khaṇḍobā take possession of his body and had attempted to pass the test which would verify possession by a god (*aṅgāt yeṇe*) to the community. I had observed the test being administered by an old *bhakta* who had previously passed the test and had thus been confirmed as a bona fide *aṅgāt ālelā*. My informant said that he heard the old man shouting, "Who are you?" He said that he could see, "as if looking down on it all from above," the god take possession of his body, that he could feel the god trying to move his tongue to answer that he was Khaṇḍobā, that he could feel the god trying to use his body to move over to where three limes smeared with *bhaṇḍār* were placed in the center of a ceremonially marked area in front of the temple. But his body would not move; his tongue would not speak. He seemed suspended in a tense and rigid trance for several minutes, then fell to the ground. He will not be accepted by the cult as an authentic *aṅgāt ālelā* until he passes this test. Indeed, until he passes the test there will be some feeling that he may in fact be possessed by a ghost.[16] My informant himself has no doubt about what kind of power was possessing him. He is certain that as soon as his body becomes more accustomed to the *vāre*[17] he will be able to let Khaṇḍobā use his body to move over to where the limes are and pass the test. He feels that the only problem is that his body is not yet ready to let Khaṇḍobā move freely in it. Soon it will be. All we must do, he told me, is to "always remember" Khaṇḍobā. He will do the rest. "If we are always remembering him, he comes. If we don't remember, he stops coming."[18]

My first interview with this informant was in February of 1971. In 1983 he had still not missed a single no-moon Monday in Jejuri. He had passed the lime test on the *Somavatī Amāvasyā* immediately following my first interview with him and has been regarded from that time on as a bona fide *aṅgāt ālelā* and is eagerly sought after during his possessions to answer questions and help find lost articles. Along with the other *aṅgāt ālelā*, he forms a group that constitutes a kind of spiritual center of those who pay back *navas* on *Somavatī Amāvasyā*. Indeed, while there is not the formalization of the hierarchy of intensity of *navas* that marks the hierarchy of intensity of the promises in the Vārkarī cult, there is clearly a similar hierarchy: the more intense the *navas*, the more power the *bhakta* can expect from the god. And in the same way that the *mahinemāha* Vārkarīs form the spiritual center of *niṣkāma bhakti* in the

Pandharpur and Alandi *vārī*, so here the *aṅgāt āleli* form a spiritual center of the Khaṇḍobā *bhaktas* who are paying back *navas* on this day.

Daṇḍavat

The second instance of *navas* repaying to compare is the performance of a ritual called *daṇḍavat*. *Daṇḍavat* is the ritual action of making a pilgrimage by successive prostrations. The *daṇḍavat* I observed was performed on Dassara (*Vijay Daśamī*) at the Mangsuli Khaṇḍobā *kṣetra* in a small Marathi speaking village in northern Karnataka state, just south of the border with Maharashtra. The woman I observed fulfilling this *navas* had made a vow one year earlier to perform *daṇḍavat* from her home in her village to the Mangsuli temple if Khaṇḍobā would give her a good daughter-in-law. He did and she repays her *navas* by performing *daṇḍavat* on the Dassara (a special day at Mangsuli for the repaying of *navas*). She begins her brief pilgrimage with her feet together on the threshhold of her home. She falls on her face, draws a mark on the ground with a stick in her right hand, rises from the ground, places her toes on the the mark that she has drawn, falls to the ground on her face again, makes a another mark with her stick and proceeds. The woman's home is only two and one-half miles from the temple, so this is not an excessively arduous *daṇḍavat*. As she makes her way through the village performing her *daṇḍavat*, she is accompanied by her new daughter-in-law, the visible proof that Khaṇḍobā has fulfilled his part of the *navas*. After entering the temple courtyard the woman continues the performance of *daṇḍavat* circumambulating the temple seven times. She then takes *darśan* of Khaṇḍobā in the temple, takes a ritual bath, and puts on a new sari. She feels that she has not only paid back her *navas*, but has intensified her relation with Khaṇḍobā in the process.

The woman did not seem at all fatigued by the *daṇḍavat* pilgrimage. Both she and her daughter-in-law seemed extremely happy. She said that she felt "very good." Her gestures were expansive. She seemed elated. Her face was radiant. She was not as articulate about her joy at fulfilling this *navas* as the Vārkarī cited above, but the quality of the experience seemed clearly of the same order of magnitude.

Jāgaraṇ for Campā Ṣaṣṭī

The third instance of *navas* repayment I suggest as parallel to the *niṣkām* promise of the Vārkarī is a *navas* to commission the performance of *jāgaraṇ*. A *jāgaraṇ* is an all-night song fest. It is similar to a *bhajan* sing except that a *jāgaraṇ* must be performed by special functionaries in the Khaṇḍobā cult called *vāghyās* and *muraḷīs*.[19] Without the *vāghyās* and *muraḷīs* it is not a proper *jāgaraṇ* and the *navas* is not paid. *Jāgaraṇs* are traditionally promised soon after a wedding, the belief being that the *jāgaraṇ* will strengthen the marriage and make it sexually successful—usually understood to mean providing male children. Sometimes, however, *jāgaraṇs* are promised simply out of devotion. One of my informants tells of such a *jāgaraṇ navas*. More than ten years ago he made a *navas* to hold a *jāgaraṇ* ever *Campā Ṣaṣṭī*.[20] He sees this annual *jāgaraṇ* as the most important annual event for him and his entire family. It is a joyous occasion characterised by extreme warmth of feeling among the family members, towards guests and towards Khaṇḍobā. Indeed the *jāgaraṇ* seals and intensifies the relationship between the family and Khaṇḍobā. The head of the family and several of the sons and one brother all become possessed by Khaṇḍobā during the course of *jāgaraṇ*. They will drift in and out of *vāre* all through the night as the *vāghyās* and *muraḷīs* sing songs praising Khaṇḍobā's exploits and fondly cataloging his foibles. They finally greet the dawn with feelings of great joy and affection for one another and for their guests. "Never at any other time is our family so much like this!" the old man exclaimed, and the visiting scholar admits that he feels the warmth and joy—indeed the "communitas"—no less than he had among the Vārkarīs on their *vārī*.

Conclusion

Lest I appear to overstate the case, it must be admitted that many instances of *sakāma navas* are trivial, selfish, and apparently rediculous. *Navas* promising in many cases brings out the worst of *bhakti* practices. Indeed in some cases the argument that *sakāma bhakti* is debased *bhakti* seems a sound one. It is undeniable that *navas* giving is more prone to abuse than the promise of the

Vārkarī, though that, too, is not without its abuses. Perhaps, however, too much has been made of the inferiority of *navas* making and *sakāma bhakti*. At its best *navas* making is equally as self giving and equally as intense an offering of devotion as is the promise of Vārkarī and it is an equally valid vehicle for the offering of devotion and the strengthening of the perceived *bhakti* relationship. The rituals of *navas* repaying provide a symbolic structure for religious devotion no less intense than the highest *niṣkāma* ritual (barring perhaps the ritual of the *mahinemāha* Vārkarī).

Differences between *niṣkāma* and *sakāma bhakti* are clear, but the differences are structural and formal more than personal and religious. On the personal religious level, it is difficult to see any difference in intensity of promise or intensity of communitas between the best of the Vārkarī promises and the best of the *sakāma navas*. At their best I am inclined to agree about these two forms of *bhakti* in Maharashtrian religion, with the pseudo-Tukārām *abhaṅga* revered in the Khaṇḍobā cult:

Tukā mahṇe ekac pāhī
Viṭṭhu Khaṇḍu dujā nāhī.

Tukā says: they are the same
Between Viṭhobā and Khaṇḍobā
There is no difference.

NOTES

***This paper is based on research done in Maharashtra in 1975 and 1983 under the auspices of grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies and Lawrence University.**

[1]See J.M. Stanley, "The Great Maharashtrian Pilgrimage: Pandharpur and Alandi," in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. E.A. Morinis. Submitted for publication.

[2]Trans. by R. Kolatkar in *Poetry India*, Vol I, No. 1; (Bombay, 1966). Kolatkar's translation even overemphasizes the particularity of Tukārām's devotion.

[3]I am indebted to S. G. Tulpule for finding these examples.

[4]An alternative interpretation is that this is a charter legend of the use of *Sadānandācā Yeḷkoṭ* (now largely a ritual slogan) as a battle cry in the cavalry.

[5]Stanley, "The Great Maharashtrian Pilgrimage." Others claim there is nohing wrong with *sakāma bhakti* offered to Khaṇḍobā or Bhavānī but that Viṭhobā does not accept it. It is interesting that normally stopping places are scheduled for *pālkhīs* on their way to Pandharpur at both Tuljapur and Jejuri (the latter for the *pālkhīs* coming from Alandi and Dehu, the former for the *pālkhīs* coming from the Eastern Deccan).

[6]Tukārām,*Poems*, 3 Vols., tr. J.N. Fraser and K.B. Marathe, (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1909-1915).

[7]Except where noted the translations are mine with the aid of S.G. Tulpule.

[8]The god Viṭhobā of Pandharpur whom the pilgrims so adore is the god of a rich and interesting Marashtrian cult with distinctive elements contributed from both the Shaivite and Kṛṣṇa cults. The Shaivite elements of the cult are ancient. The original shrine seems to have been a *liṅgam*. Though the Shaivite elements remain in the cult, today Viṭhobā's principle identification is as a form of Kṛṣṇa. The Vaishnavite identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu is, however, suppressed. For further accounts of this cult and of the Vārkarī's promise, see S.G Tulpule, "The Origins of Viṭṭhaḷa: A New Interpretation," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, (1977); H.B.P. Neurgāvkar, *Sādaśiv: Pālkhī Sohla* (Puṇe: Sau. Umātī Sādaśiv Neurgāvkar, 1936); G.A. Deleury, (Poona: Deccan College, 1960); Charlotte Vaudeville, "Pandharpur, the City of Saints," in *Structuralism in South India*, ed. Glen Yocum and Harry Buck (Chambersburg, Penn., 1974); Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Irawati Karve, "On the Road: A Maharashtrian Pilgrimage," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 22 (1962); Stanley, "The Great Maharashtrian Pilgrimage".

[9]Stanley, "The Great Maharashtrian Pilgrimage". The usual term in Marathi for pilgrimage is the Sanskrit word *yātrā* or *tīrthayātrā*. Pilgrims to Pandharpur and Alandi eschew this term and refer to their pilgrimage as *vārī*. The root of the word is *var*, meaning "special period of time." *Vārī* thus denotes the "regular" appearance of a person at a certain place at a certain time. A Vārkarī denotes one who "does" or "performs" (*karṇe*) a *vārī* to Viṭhobā.

[10]*Ibid.* They travel singly, not usually joining *pālkhīs* or *diṇḍīs*, though at Pandharpur and Alandi they have sub-groups into which they occasionally gather (30 in some; 20 in others; as few as five or six in some) after reaching the holy city. It is said if one of their sub-groups does not arrive by the tenth day of the fortnight at the anticipated goal, the rest are concerned. If the man hasn't arrived on the eleventh day, they assume he has died.

[11]A *Somavatī Amāvasyā* is the correspondence of an *amāvasyā tithī*, the thirtieth lunar day in the month and a Somavār (Monday). For a technical definition and explaination, see J.M. Stanley, "Special Time, Special Power: The Fluidity of Power in a Popular Hindu Festival," *Journal of Asian Studies*, (1977).

[12]See J.M. Stanley, "Gods Ghosts and Possession," unpublished ms., 1971, for an explaination of this phenomenon.

[13]Banubāī is Khaṇḍobā's second wife. She is a *dhangar* (shepherd caste) and is conceived of mythologically as an *avatār* of Gaṅgā. Hegaḍī Pradhān (also a *dhangar* and brother of Banubāī) is conceived of mythologically as an *avatār* of Viṣṇu. It is not clear how much of these and other mythological correspondences between the Khaṇḍobā myth and the Śaivite mythology of the "Great Tradition" are the result of parochialization and how much the result of universalization. (See Günther Sontheimer's comments on parochialization in the Khaṇḍobā cult in his paper in this volume.) Both of these processes have been at work in the cult in a complex way for a long time. In any case, the elaborate correspondences, which explain Khaṇḍobā's wives, dog, horse, *muraḷīs*, etc., as *avatārs* of various "Great Tradition" deities are widely known in the cult and form the fabric of many of the *vāghyās'* songs about Khaṇḍobā.

[14]Mhāḷsā is Khaṇḍobā's first wife, thought to be an *avatār* of Parvatī.

[15]For a full explanation of these rituals, see Stanley, "Special Time, Special Power".

[16]Maharashtrian culture distinguishes sharply between ghost possession (*bhūt badha*) and god possession (*aṅgāt yeṇe* or *vāre*). Possession by a ghost is negative, debilitating, defiling, and polluting. Possession by a god is positive, power giving, and generally enhancing. See Stanley, "Gods, Ghosts and Possession".

[17]*Vāre* is the more commonly used term for *aṅgāt yeṇe*.

[18]Stanley, "Gods, Ghosts and Possession".

[19]***Vāghyās*** (literally "tigers"—so-called because they wear around one shoulder a tiger skin bag containing the god's sacred tumeric powder) are males whose parents dedicated them to Khaṇḍobā in fulfillment of a *navas*. They are regarded as descendants of Khaṇḍobā's dogs and often act out a canine role at festivals—crawling on hands and knees and barking their devotion to their god. They beg alms for him on certain days each week and carry the alms to the temple where they sing and dance Khaṇḍobā's praise. In addition to singing and dancing in the temple they condust the very important all-night *jāgaraṇs*. *Muraḷīs* are the female counter-part of *vāghyās*. The Maharashtrian equivalent of South Indian *devadāsīs*, they are dedicated to Khaṇḍobā at birth and betrothed to him as children. They are considered Khaṇḍobā's brides. They spend their entire lives in his service—singing songs, dancing at his festivals, and, together with the *vāghyās*, perform in *jāgaraṇs* for his devotees. In cult mythology they are considered descendants of a godess who was an *avatār* of the flute of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They do not marry, though often they live with *Vāghyās* and raise families.

[20]*Campā ṣaṣṭī* is the sixth lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. It marks the culmination of six days of special observances to Khaṇḍobā called Khaṇḍobācā Navrātra. It is an especially auspicious time for *jāgaraṇs*.

The Religious Significance of Ṛddhipur

by ANNE FELDHAUS

Ṛddhipur is a village in Morśī Taluka of Amrāvatī District, in northeastern Maharashtra. At present a village of approximately 7000 inhabitants, it is the chief pilgrimage place of the Mahānubhāvs, a *bhakti* sect founded in the thirteenth century. Ṛddhipur is the subject of a large number of the Mahānubhāvs' medieval Marāṭhī texts, and today it is the permanent residence of several families of lay Mahānubhāvs, the location of ten Mahānubhāv monasteries, and the goal of tens of thousands of pilgrims each year. In this paper I will present an analysis of the religious meanings of Ṛddhipur. I will discuss, first, its significance in terms of Mahānubhāv sectarian theology; second, the significance which Mahānubhāvs ascribe to it in relation to classical Hindu mythology and to all-India pilgrimage places; third, the vestiges and survivals, in and alongside Mahānubhāv practice, of the non-sectarian folk Hinduism of the village; and, fourth, some other elements, non-Mahānubhāv and in several cases non-Hindu, in the religious life of Ṛddhipur.

My analysis is based on visits to Ṛddhipur made in 1979, 1982, and 1983;[1] on conversations with Mahānubhāv monks, nuns, and lay people held throughout Maharashtra in 1982 and 1983; and on four of the Mahānubhāv Old Marāṭhī religious-geographical texts: the *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya* of Maheśvarpaṇḍit, the *Ṛddhipur Varṇan* of Nārobās, and the *Sthān Pothī*—all of which can be dated, with varying degrees of certitude, to the fourteenth century—and Kṛṣṇamuni Kavi Ḍimbh's seventeenth-century *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*.[2]

I

As a Mahānubhāv pilgrimage place, Ṛddhipur is the most important of a set of what is said to be 1650 such places in Maharashtra. These places are important to Mahānubhāvs because they were visited by the Mahānubhāvs' founder, Cakradhar, by Kṛṣṇa, or by another of five persons the Mahānubhāvs believe to have been incarnations (*avatāras*) of Parameśvara (the one and only Supreme God). In the thirteenth century, Ṛddhipur was the town of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, who, besides being the guru of Cakradhar, was himself also numbered among the five *avatāras*.[3] Guṇḍam Rāüḷ lived in Ṛddhipur, Cakradhar visited there several times, and after Cakradhar's demise, his disciples came and stayed there for the fourteen years until Guṇḍam Rāüḷ died.[4]

But that was in the thirteenth century, when the last *avatāras* we know of lived. So why do Mahānubhāvs visit Ṛddhipur now? Three concepts Mahānubhāvs use to explain their pilgrimage practice link their places of pilgrimage with the former presence of the *avatāras*. These concepts are *smaraṇa*, *śakti*, and *pavitratā*.

Smaraṇa means "recollection," "remembrance." Lacking the actual presence of an *avatāra*, Mahānubhāvs are enjoined to practice *smaraṇa* of the names, appearance, and deeds (*līḷās*) of the *avatāras* of the past.[5] Biographies of Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ composed soon after their deaths are the most important aids to *smaraṇa*,[6] but pilgrimage also can serve.

Indeed, biography and pilgrimage are intimately linked in the Mahānubhāv tradition. The biographies, which are rather cavalier about such historical details as chronology, are scrupulously precise about locations: details are given indicating in exactly which village a given episode occurred—and, in Ṛddhipur, under exactly which tree or at exactly which corner of a building or courtyard. This suggests that locational information was important to the biographer and his early readers. In addition, the Mahānubhāv literature includes a text devoted solely to listing and describing the villages and towns visited by Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, noting the spots where they stood, sat, stayed, ate, slept, and excreted, giving the directional orientations of buildings, gates, and doorways they used, and referring laconically to the *līḷās* they did on the spots. This text is called the *Sthān Pothī*, "The Book of Places."[7]

The brevity of the *Sthān Pothī*'s references to the biographical episodes indicates an assumption that the reader is familiar with the biographies; certainly, knowing the biographies is essential to understanding the *Sthān Pothī*. The *Sthān Pothī* is organized according to the divisions of the biographies, rather than by subregions of the pilgrimage area; and the order of the villages and towns covered in each section of the *Sthān Pothī* is the order in which they are covered in the biographies; a modern guidebook, by contrast, follows the order most convenient for the pilgrim.[8] These facts suggest that the pilgrimage the *Sthān Pothī* guides may as often have been mental as actual. In any case, the mental element of even an actual pilgrimage is essential—the *smaraṇa*, recollection, of the god who once lived at the places being visited.

A heavily pious version of such *smaraṇa* is illustrated in Nārobās's *Ṛddhipur Varṇan*, a fourteenth-century(?)[9] poem of 641 verses in an ornate style. Amid long excurses on the poet's unworthiness, and shorter ones on the mercy of God, each step adorned by elaborate strings of highly artificial similes, the poet describes his approach to Ṛddhipur, dwelling in turn upon the outskirts of Ṛddhipur, the trees, the temples, and the lakes on the outskirts, the entry into the town, the main street leading to the complex of three temple-monasteries where Guṇḍam Raüḷ lived, the steps up to the main gateway of the compound, the gateway itself, the verandah of the Rājmaḍh (the Narasiṃha temple which was Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's main residence), the dilapidated wall of the Rājmaḍh, its doorway, the Narasiṃha image inside, the spots where Guṇḍam Rāüḷ had his massage and his meals, Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's cot, and—from toes to head—the parts of his remembered body. The poem ends on a note of *viraha*, sorrow that Guṇḍam Rāüḷ is no longer there.

Modern-day visits to Ṛddhipur seem less solemn than this, but they do bring Guṇḍam Rāüḷ to mind. The village is studded with aniconic *oṭās*,[10] simple concrete blocks, marking spots where Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ did various things. Many of the *oṭās* are housed in shrines or temples; more are simply out in the open; several are to be found in monasteries and in the houses of lay people, both Mahānubhāv and non-Mahānubhāv. Map 1 indicates the locations of a number of the *oṭās*, but there are many more. Prominent among the revered places (*sthāns*) are the Thinking Rock (Vicār Cīrā), where Guṇḍam Rāüḷ used to sit and think where to go next (number 30 on map 1); the Twelve Horses (Bārā Ghoḍe),

rocks he used to sit on and pretend were horses (number 11); the Measure-Breaking Gaṇapati (Māp Phoḍyā Gaṇapati), an image on whose head Guṇḍam Rāüḷ used to break false measures from the marketplace (number 57); several places (e.g., number 2 and number 68) where Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ met; and numerous spots in the Rājmaḍh compound (number 32).

The stories connected with the places are not illustrated on the *oṭās* or their shrines, and in only one place in Ṛddhipur, the Rājmaḍh, are the things that happened there listed in writing nearby. But the stories are told orally, or referred to, by pilgrims to one another, or by residents (Mahānubhāv and non-Mahānubhāv) to pilgrims. In many cases, the places are named for the *līḷās* which were done at them, so that merely to name the place is to bring its story to mind. Since many of the things Guṇḍam Rāüḷ did were crazy, odd, or funny, the stories are often recounted or remembered with a chuckle and a smile. Occasionally a moral is drawn from the stories and applied to contemporary life in Ṛddhipur. For instance, the head of one of Ṛddhipur's monasteries told me, referring to the Measure-Breaking Gaṇapati, that people still say this is Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's town and so storekeepers should not cheat.[11] Bhau Mandavkar, not a Mahānubhāv, but a social reformer with a Ph.D. in Marāṭhī literature and research interests in the Mahānubhāv pilgrimage places, pointed out that, just as Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, though a Brāhman, spent a good deal of his time in the houses of low-caste people and Untouchables, so the *sthāns* of Ṛddhipur today are concentrated in low-caste and Buddhist neighbourhoods.[12]

Thus, the *sthāns* of Ṛddhipur serve as concrete reminders of the deeds of God, and the idea of *smaraṇa* seems to be an important element in Mahānubhāv pilgrimage practice. But many pious pilgrims and residents of Ṛddhipur do homage to—that is, bow to and touch with their foreheads—*oṭās* marking spots which they can't identify, spots about which, when asked, they say simply "*sthān āhe*," ("It's a *sthān*") or "*kāhītarī keleṃ*" ("He did something-or-other"), sometimes with a tone implying that the questioner is demanding too much specificity. Such people, at such *sthāns*, are clearly not reflecting on any specific deed done at the place, but are showing reverence simply for the fact that an *avatāra* of Parameśvara has been there. Moreover, in explaining the importance of the *sthāns*, modern-day informants use other concepts more often than they use the concept of *smaraṇa*.

One of these is the idea that *śakti*,[13] power, is deposited in a place by contact with an *avatāra* of Parameśvara. This idea is found as early as the *Sūtrapāṭha*, the late-thirteenth-century collection of Cakradhar's aphorisms. One of the aphorisms, *sūtra* X.171, states, "*vastusaṃbaṃdheṃ śaktinīkṣepu*," "*śakti* is deposited through contact with the Absolute." Present-day Mahānubhāvs who are well-educated in the tradition distinguish two kinds of *śakti, kṛpā* (mercy) and *māyā*. *Māyā śakti* is left automatically in everything touched by an *avatāra* and every place he went, but *kṛpā śakti* must be deposited intentionally. The *śakti* in the *sthāns* makes pilgrimage to them effective both in solving practical, worldly problems and in increasing one's inner worthiness, helping one to transcend this world and its suffering and to attain the permanent presence of Parameśvara.[14]

Related to the concept of *śakti*—but not, I think, identical with it—is the concept of *pavitratā*, which could perhaps best be translated "holiness," but which (not unlike "holiness") has also the sense of "purity." The *pavitratā* of a place attracts pilgrims to it, but it can also cause them to keep a respectful distance. This idea is basic to an important chapter in the oral history of Ṛddhipur. According to several of the best-informed residents, the monasteries of Ṛddhipur are a relatively recent development. From the death of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ until a couple of hundred years ago (estimates vary from 100 to 400 years, with 150 being a fairly standard number), Mahānubhāv monks and nuns would not stay in Ṛddhipur. Nowadays Mahānubhāv monks and nuns not only live in Ṛddhipur, but also urinate and defecate there, and wear in the village sandals made of the skin of dead animals. But, according to my informants, the monastic establishments of Ṛddhipur grew up only after a sizeable group of monks[15] spent the four-month rainy season retreat in Ṛddhipur, collecting their urine and feces to be carried out each morning beyond the farthest boundaries of the village.[16] Asked the reason why Mahānubhāv monks and nuns avoided staying in Ṛddhipur until such elaborate precautions had been worked out, the Mahant (abbot) who gave me the fullest version of this story explained:[17]

> This was all *pavitra* ground. That is, this was ground which had become *pavitra* by being marked by Govindprabhu's [Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's] feet.

As another monk expressed it,[18]

Since Govindprabhu was an *avatāra* of Parameśvara, how can we put our feet where he put his? It would be like sitting in the Collector's chair!

Prominent in such explanations of the *pavitratā* of the Mahānubhāv places—and also, to some extent, in explanations of their *śakti*—is mention of the touch of an *avatāra*'s feet. This is the closest I got, for instance, to a standardized explanation of one of the more distinctive types of Mahānubhāv holy places. These are the *pariśray sthāns*, places where Cakradhar or Guṇḍam Rāüḷ defecated. Such places are mentioned frequently in the *Sthān Pothī* , and several of them are marked by *oṭās* and revered today. What makes the *pariśray sthāns* important, everyone agrees, is that *anywhere* the *avatāras* did *anything* is important. But several people suggested that when Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ squatted to defecate, their feet stayed longer than usual touching the ground in a single place, and that it is for this reason that these spots are especially worthy of note.

II

Mahānubhāvs use the concepts of *smaraṇa*, *śakti*, and *pavitratā*, then, to articulate the importance of going on pilgrimage now to a place where Guṇḍam Rāüḷ lived and Cakradhar visited in the thirteenth century. These concepts are not unique to the Mahānubhāvs—indeed, they are probably not unique to India—but it is only for Mahānubhāvs that Guṇḍam Rāüḷ and Cakradhar are incarnations of Parameśvara, and hence only for Mahānubhāvs is their connection with Ṛddhipur religiously important.[19]

But Mahānubhāvs impute to Ṛddhipur another kind of significance as well, one which places Ṛddhipur on the map of the all-India, Sanskritic tradition. For Ṛddhipur is said to be the locus of activities of gods and heroes in *purāṇic* times. These stories are, for the most part, not found in the Mahānubhāv biographies, but they are found in both of the texts called *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*. They are known and related today, though usually not in response to the question, "What's the importance of Ṛddhipur?"—to this question one gets answers having to do with Guṇḍam Rāüḷ—but, rather, in response to questions about what was there before Guṇḍam Raüḷ, or to questions about how Ṛddhipur got its name.

Ṛddhipur was originally Rucikāśrama or Rucikapur, the forest hermitage of a sage (*ṛṣi*) named Rucika. Rucika was a great ascetic,

who through his ascetic power (*tapas*) won the wish-granting cow (Kāmadhenu), the wish-granting tree (Kalpataru), and the wish-granting gem (Cintāmaṇi). Since, it is said, these three are called *ṛddhis*, Rucikāśrama came to be called Ṛddhipur.[20]

The major story about Rucika is the story of his marriage. To win his bride, Rucika had to present her parents with five hundred black-eared horses. After searching far and wide (even in heaven he could find only one horse of the required type—one of the seven which pull the sun's chariot), he finally obtained the horses at Māhūr (a hundred miles to the south) from Dattātreya and his mother.[21]

Rucika's son was Jamadagni, and Jamadagni married Reṇukā, famous outside Mahānubhāv circles as the chief goddess of Māhūr. The best-known son of Reṇukā and Jamadagni was Paraśurām. For many Hindus—though not for Mahānubhāvs—Paraśurām is an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Both Mahānubhāvs and non-Mahānubhāvs tell two main stories about Paraśurām, but only the Mahānubhāvs place these stories in Ṛddhipur. One of the stories is that of Paraśurām cutting off his mother's head at his father's command, and then, when permitted to restore her to life, switching her head with that of a low-caste woman or goddess.[22] The other story is that of Paraśurām killing all the Kṣatriyas on earth (the members of the warrior caste) twenty-one times. This happened, according to the Mahānubhāv account, in retaliation for an outrage committed at Ṛddhipur. A Kṣatriya general killed Paraśurām's parents in an attempt to wrest the wish-granting cow from them. In accordance with his mother's dying request, Paraśurām carried his parents' corpses to Māhūr, where he had Dattātreya perform their funeral rites.[23]

According to some present-day Mahānubhāvs,[24] this episode gave Ṛddhipur the name Rudhirpur—"Bloodville"—either because of the flow of Reṇukā's blood, or because of that of the Kṣatriyas.[25]

Besides the Rucika-Reṇukā-Paraśurām cycle, another set of stories tells how various gods came to live in Ṛddhipur, to await there Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's descent (*avatāra*) in the (present) Kali Age. Kṛṣṇamuni's *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya* describes this migration, dwelling at greatest length on the story of Narasiṃha.[26]

Narasiṃha is the man-lion, like Paraśurām understood by non-Mahānubhāvs as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Narasiṃha's heroic deed was

to kill a demon by clawing out his intestines. Since the demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu, was a Brāhman, Narasiṃha's deed entailed the sin of Brāhman-murder, one of the four greatest sins. Burdened by this sin, Narasiṃha bathed at a series of eight holy places, culminating in Ṛddhipur. Each of these places became the site of a Narasiṃha temple, and at least some of them subsequently became places of Mahānubhāv pilgrimage. Finally, in Ṛddhipur, Narasiṃha attained peace of mind. The temple built for him there was the Rājmaḍh, the temple which much later became Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's dwelling place.[27] The other gods Kṛṣṇamuni mentions as having come to settle in Ṛddhipur are the ones in whose temples Guṇḍam Rāüḷ was later to play. Thus, through this set of stories, Kṛṣṇamuni is telling us a good deal about the religious archaeology of Ṛddhipur.[28]

Kṛṣṇamuni is also explaining the importance (the *māhātmya*) of Ṛddhipur in terms of the Sanskrit mythological tradition. Though, for Mahānubhāv theology, Jamadagni and Reṇukā, Paraśurām, Narasiṃha, and so on, are mere *devatās*, deities of a relative sort far inferior to Parameśvara,[29] the fact remains that outside the Mahānubhāv sect these are figures of all-India importance, whose stories are told in Sanskrit *purāṇas*, and to place them in Ṛddhipur is to exalt Ṛddhipur in terms comprehensible even to those who have never heard of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ. It is also, particularly through the Reṇukā-Paraśurām stories, to connect Ṛddhipur with Māhūr, which may well be the most important Hindu pilgrimage place in the region.

Connection with pilgrimage places important to all of India is another way that Ṛddhipur is linked to the broader Hindu tradition. One such connection is that between Ṛddhipur and the set of *jyotirliṅgas*, twelve most important Śiva temples from throughout India. Kṛṣṇamuni names an analogous set, called the "*mahāliṅgas*," one of which he identifies as a Śiva temple in Ṛddhipur.[30] Kṛṣṇamuni seems to be the only Mahānubhāv author who makes this connection between Ṛddhipur and the *jyotirliṅgas*; much more frequently, Ṛddhipur is connected with Kāśī (Banaras) or with Dvārkā.

To call a major pilgrimage place Kāśī is so common in India that it is almost trite, but for Mahānubhāvs to use such a metaphor is to transcend their sectarian exclusiveness. The comparison is recorded as having first been made by Cakradhar,[31] and Mahānubhāvs in Ṛddhipur echo him to this day.

More prominent in Mahānubhāv literature than the identification of Ṛddhipur with Kāśī is its identification with Dvārkā, or Dvārāvatī, Kṛṣṇa's capital on the far west coast of India. A *sthān* called the Vision of Dvārkā (Dvārkādarśan) is located in one of the monasteries (number 9 on map 1). The story now told in connection with this *sthān* has as its kernel a story found in the biography of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ:[32]

Bhaṭ used to beg in Vāṅkī, Dīghī, and Deūḷvāḍā for the service [of the Gosāvī]. One day Bhaṭ had gone to Deūḷvāḍā. He was sitting in a corner of Narasiṃha's temple. Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ was expounding a *purāṇa*. In expounding the *purāṇa*, Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ evoked its sentiments with originality. Then, full of passion, he said, "There's a soul, but there's no god [for it]."

Bhaṭ replied, "There is a god, but there are no souls [who come to him]."

Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ said, "Isn't this a soul?" and he placed his hand on his chest.

Bhaṭ said, "Isn't that God? He lives in Ṛddhipur," and he raised his hand toward Ṛddhipur.

And immediately Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ got up. Bhaṭ got up also. [Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ] came for *darśan* of Śrīprabhu [Guṇḍam Rāüḷ]. He met Śrīprabhu. He prostrated himself. He touched the holy feet. Then Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ became a disciple, and began to stay in the Gosāvī's presence.

The elaborated version of this story specifies that the *purāṇa* Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ was reciting was the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, best known for its many stories of Kṛṣṇa; and that Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ was shown not simply Guṇḍam Rāüḷ and Ṛddhipur, but Guṇḍam Rāüḷ in the form of Kṛṣṇa, and Ṛddhipur in the form of Dvārkā. This elaborated version is recounted in Kṛṣṇamuni's *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*,[33] and provides the basic plot of Maheśvarpaṇḍit's *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*.[34]

Since Kṛṣṇa, besides being a god for other Hindus, is for Mahānubhāvs one of the incarnations of Parameśvara, Mahānubhāvs are not stepping outside their sectarian boundaries in connecting Ṛddhipur with Dvārkā.[35] But they are, once again, describing the importance of Ṛddhipur in terms relevant to the wider tradition.

III

Thus, grafted onto the basic significance of Ṛddhipur for Mahānubhāvs—the fact that Guṇḍam Rāüḷ lived there and Cakradhar visited there—are a number of stories and identifications which establish Ṛddhipur's importance in the idiom of all-India

mythological and pilgrimage traditions. This is one side of the non-sectarian Hindu significance of Ṛddhipur. There is another side as well—the pre-Mahānubhāv religion of the village.

Many of the places which are now Mahānubhāv *sthāns* were originally the shrines or temples of various Hindu deities with whose images Guṇḍam Rāüḷ played. For the most part, these deities and their worship have been displaced, their shrines now housing aniconic Mahānubhāv *oṭās*. But in many ways the deities have left their mark. For instance, a Mahānubhāv temple on the site of a goddess's temple in which Guṇḍam Rāüḷ played (number 41 on map 1) has inside it two Mahānubhāv *oṭās* and an image of Kṛṣṇa holding a flute.[36] But the name of the temple is still that of the goddess: Mahākālī. Bhairav Burūj (number 10), which was a Bhairava (Śiva) temple when Cakradhar stayed there once for ten months, is now a Mahānubhāv temple, complete with *oṭās*. Outside the temple, off toward the back, are a *liṅga* (the most common representation of Śiva) and a Nandī (Śiva's bull vehicle), not obviously objects of worship, but decently preserved nonetheless.

In some places, as in the temple of the Measure-Breaking Gaṇapati, the original Hindu image is itself the object to which Mahānubhāvs do homage. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the deities most central to village religious life: Māruti (the monkey god) and the village-protector goddess(es). In the case of the village's largest Māruti (number 64 on Map 1), non-Mahānubhāv villagers worship him from the front, while Mahānubhāvs go around to the back.[37] The chief goddess of the village—according to many people—is Kolhārāī ("Jackal-Lady"). At her temple (number 53 on map 1), Mahānubhāvs and non-Mahānubhāvs worship side by side.

Thus, at these places, Mahānubhāv worship appears to have grown, like a vine, over the tree of the village Hinduism of Ṛddhipur, choking off some branches and twining more gently around others, but leaving intact the basic shape of the tree.

One way that the Mahānubhāv creeper has been shaped by the Hindu tree is revealed in the ways the Mahānubhāvs act toward their *oṭās*. Despite the *oṭās'* apparent aniconicity, they are treated by Mahānubhāvs much the same way as *mūrtis* are treated by Hindus. *Āratī*-songs are sung before the *oṭās*, and trays of lights are waved; food is offered to them, and *prasād* received back; they are smeared with sandalwood paste; and some of them are dressed in what is

much more like a skirt than a table cloth. The only bit of design on the *oṭās* is the half-moon mark and dot drawn on some of them at the center top of one side. When asked, Mahānubhāvs identify this as being obviously a forehead mark;[38] this fact suggests that the *oṭā* is thought of, much like a Hindu *mūrti*, as a person.

The most striking example in Ṛddhipur of a Hindu element[39] showing through its Mahānubhāv overgrowth is the Eight Jayās. The Eight Jayās (*aṣṭajayā*) is the name given to a set of *sthāns* located on the far edges of Ṛddhipur. In Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's time, these were the temples of goddesses, and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ played with them. Now they are marked with Mahānubhāv *oṭās*, but they are still named for the goddesses, each of whose name ends in "*-jaī*." These goddesses—and now the *sthāns*—are understood as the directional guardians of Ṛddhipur.

The set of Eight Jayās is mentioned in Kṛṣṇamuni's *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*,[40] and some individual ones are included in the *Sthān Pothī*,[41] but the Eight Jayās cannot be said to be prominent in Mahānubhāv literature. In contemporary practice, on the other hand, they are much more noticeable. Many name them among the "most important" *sthāns* of Ṛddhipur; and they play an important role in a festival held every year at the full moon of the month of Āṣāḍh (June-July).[42]

On this day, one group of pilgrims carries out a vow connected with the Eight Jayās. These pilgrims are Gavaḷīs, members of a cowherd caste, and their vow is to "do" the Eight Jayās. To "do" the Jayās is to run from the Thinking Rock, outside the main entrance of the Rājmaḍh, to each of the Jayās, and back, making a standard offering at each Jayā and at each stop at the Thinking Rock. This trip, estimated to involve running some forty miles, is all to be done in the twenty-four-hour period ending the night before the full-moon day.

The Gavaḷīs who make and fulfil this vow are young men from a few villages in Yavatmāl and Vardhā Districts of Maharashtra. They come to Ṛddhipur six years in a row to "do" the Jayās, the sixth year bringing their wives along and running, with their wives, not out and in from Ṛddhipur to each of the Jayās and back, but from Ṛddhipur out to the first Jayā[43] and from there in a clockwise circle to each of the other Jayās. This route covers a shorter distance than the other, but it is considered more difficult, as it involves more cross-country travel.

Gavaḷīs are the only ones, as far as I could discover, who do this feat in this way at this time. Other pilgrims come to Ṛddhipur on the full-moon day of Āṣāḍh, but the main activity for them is to pay homage to the relics of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ which are kept in each of the monasteries and brought out to be reverenced on this day. Everyone seems to think the Gavaḷīs are admirable—or cute—but no one seems to imitate them.

When I asked some of the Gavaḷīs why they "do" the Eight Jayās and no one else does, I was told, "It's our *dharma* from the beginning," "Our *dharma* is different," "They [the Eight Jayās] are our god," "We have to get *darśan* of all the places where our god [here, Guṇḍam Rāüḷ] lived," and so on. Asked how long their families have been Mahānubhāv, one of the most articulate of them answered that they have been Mahānubhāvs since the time of Kṛṣṇa, who was himself a cowherd and the cowherds' god (and who is, for Mahānubhāvs, one of the five incarnations of Parameśvara).

Though the Gavaḷīs themselves, in explaining their Mahānubhāv heritage, emphasized their own connections with Kṛṣṇa, residents of Ṛddhipur pointed out their ritual's connection with Guṇḍam Rāüḷ. Residents point out that the center from which the Gavalīs set out, and to which they return, only to set out again for another place, is the Thinking Rock. It is here that Guṇḍam Rāüḷ used to sit to decide where to go, before running off there to do some crazy thing. The Gavaḷīs' ritual can be seen as an acting out of such stories, as a kind of *smaraṇa* through imitation. And this is surely part of the ritual's meaning. But not all. The fact that it is only Gavaḷīs who do the ritual, that the Gavaḷīs come from a circumscribed set of villages, that it is former goddess temples that they go to, that these goddesses are understood as directional guardians, and that the route that is followed emphasizes the directional or orientational character of the goddesses—all this leads me to believe that the Gavaḷīs' ritual reveals an old connection between the Gavaḷīs and Ṛddhipur, between the Gavaḷīs and the Eight Jayās, and between the Eight Jayās and the basic orientation of Ṛddhipur, its anchoring in an ordered world.

Sontheimer's findings about the displacement of Gavaḷīs by agriculture,[44] and Vaudeville's on the connections between goddesses and cowherds,[45] seem to me to lend support to a hypothesis that the Gavaḷīs who come to Ṛddhipur at the full moon of Āṣāḍh are descendants of former residents of Ṛddhipur who had

some special connection with the original eight goddesses. That these goddesses had to do with the grounding and orientation of Ṛddhipur is explicitly recognized by present-day residents, who call them directional guardians.

IV

Thus, besides its *purāṇic* history, Mahānubhāv Ṛddhipur has also another kind of history, prior to Guṇḍam Rāüḷ and the thirteenth century, which is discernible in Ṛddhipur today. But still we have not exhausted the religious significance of Ṛddhipur or the kinds of religious life that are lived there. There remains much that the Mahānubhāv significance has not been able to assimilate, much that is still unconnected—though sometimes quite close—to the Mahānubhāv *sthāns*.

Of many examples,[46] only one will be mentioned here: the Muslim presence in Ṛddhipur. Ṛddhipur is not a place of pilgrimage for Muslims, but Muslims form a sizeable portion of Ṛddhipur's population, and the town has five mosques and at least two *dargas* (Muslim saints' shrines). The most striking Muslim presence in Ṛddhipur is the mosque located on the site of the Rājmaḍh, the Narasiṃha temple which served as Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's residence. An inscription on the wall of this mosque states that Aurangzeb (the seventeenth-century Muslim emperor widely famed as a persecutor of Hinduism) tore down the temple and built a mosque on the site; the present mosque, according to the inscription, is the product of renovations completed in 1878.[47]

It is highly unlikely that Aurangzeb ever came to Ṛddhipur, let alone built a mosque there; but how a mosque did come to be built on this site is a question to which I have not yet found a satisfactory answer. The answer may have as much to do with the affinities between Muslims and Mahānubhāvs (monotheism; rejection of image worship; even, some have suggested, the black garments worn by some Mahānubhāv monks and nuns)[48] as with the tensions between Muslims and Hindus. But, whatever the explanation, the fact remains that the most important Mahānubhāv pilgrimage spot in Ṛddhipur is now the site of a mosque.

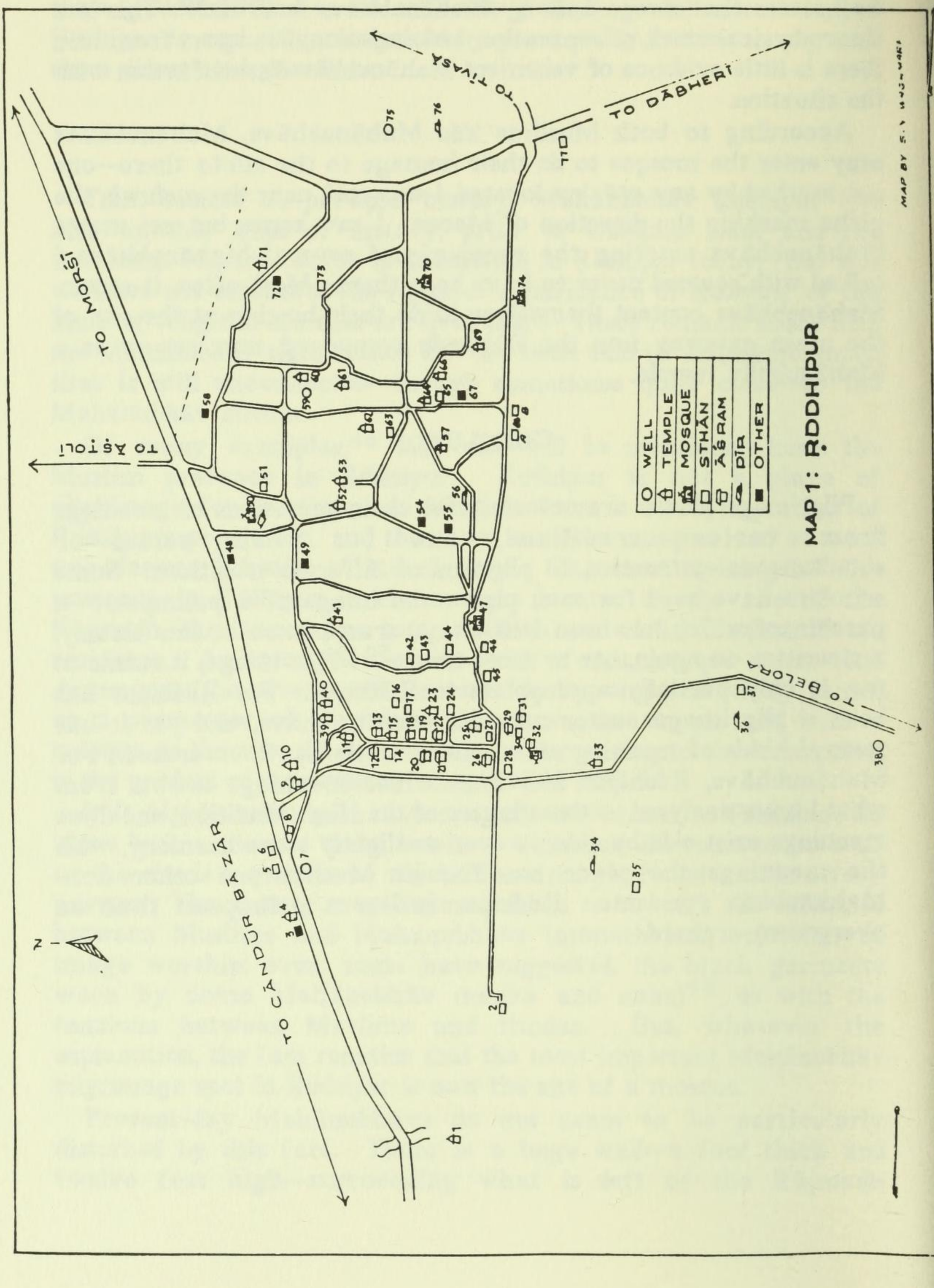
Present-day Mahānubhāvs do not seem to be particularly disturbed by this fact. There *is* a huge wall—a foot thick and twelve feet high—surrounding what is left of the Rājmaḍh

courtyard, and excluding the mosque itself. An inscription on this wall states that it was built by Mahānubhāvs in 1902.[49] This is a clear physical mark of separation and exclusion; but, apart from this, there is little evidence of vehement Mahānubhāv dissatisfaction with the situation.

According to both Muslims and Mahānubhāvs, Mahānubhāvs may enter the mosque to do their homage to the *sthān* there—one not marked by any *oṭā*, but located, I was told, near the *mehrab*, the niche marking the direction of Mecca. I saw some, but not many, Mahānubhāvs entering the mosque; and several Mahānubhāvs I talked with seemed never to have been there. Most often, it seems, Mahānubhāvs content themselves to do their bowing at the site of the main gateway into the Rājmaḍh compound, now set up as a Mahānubhāv temple.

Conclusion

Pilgrimage places are notorious for their accretions of meanings from various traditions, and for their serial—or simultaneous—attraction to pilgrims of different traditions. Some scholars have used for such places the image of a palimpsest—a parchment which has been written on, erased more or less cleanly, and written on again, one or more times.[50] This image, it seems to me, is only partially appropriate to Ṛddhipur. For Ṛddhipur has been a pilgrimage center only for Mahānubhāvs, and yet it has several kinds of meaning all at once. Little has been erased. For Mahānubhāvs, Ṛddhipur has intertwined meanings drawn from what I have analyzed as three layers of the Hindu tradition; and these meanings exist side by side, in ever-so-slightly tense harmony, with the meanings the place has for its Muslim and other non-Mahānubhāv residents. Ṛddhipur is less a palimpsest than an overgrown orchard.



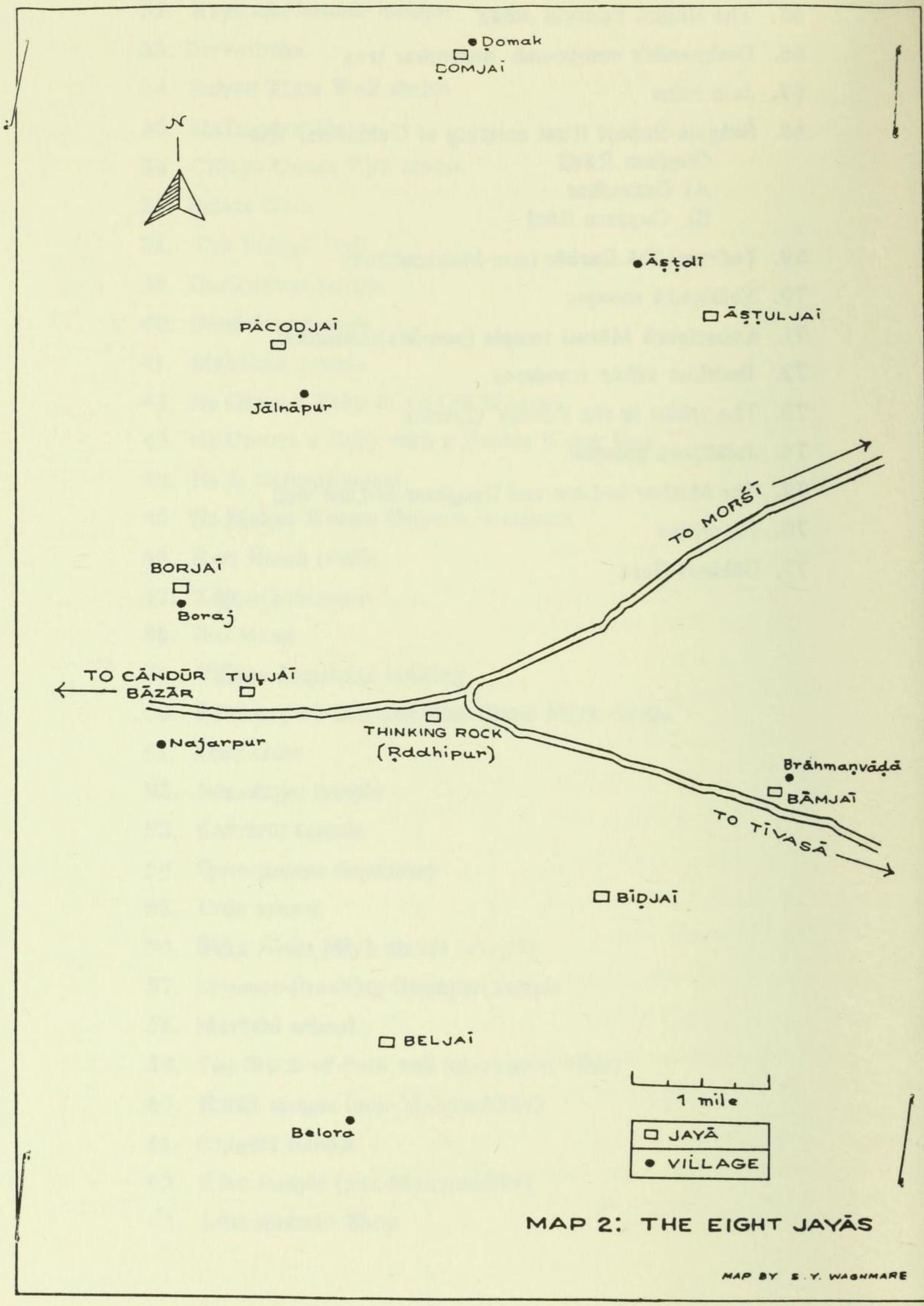
MAP 1: RDDHIPUR

KEY TO MAP 1

1. **Vājeśvarī temple**
2. **The Place of the Water Jars (*āḷandī*)**
3. **Government rest house (modern)**
4. **Māruti shrine (non-Mahānubhāv)**
5. **He Plays with the Cowherd Women**
6. **The Resting Place (*visāvā*) (?)**
7. **Sūtak well**
8. **The Place of the Tent (*dusa*) (?)**
9. **Āṣṭurkar monastery/Vision of Dvārkā**
10. **Bhairav Burūj**
11. **The Twelve "Horses"**
12. **Bhagatrāj monastery/Datta temple**
13. **Daryāpūrkar monastery**
14. **He Brings a Dead Calf to Life**
15. **The Śrāvaṇī Day temple**
16. **The High Lane**
17. **He Slaps Bhaṭ**
18. **Vāïndeśkar monastery**
19. **The Thirteenth "Horse"**
20. **Yakṣadev monastery**
21. **Gopīrāj monastery**
22. **Ṛddhipurkar monastery**
23. **Khokalāī shrine**
24. **The Stable (*ghoḍavaḍī*)**
25. **His Light Shines from the Dung Heap**
26. **Taḷegāvkar monastery**
27. **Āvār (Keśav Nāyak's compound)**
28. **He Accompanies His Daughter**
29. **Paiṭhaṇkar monastery**
30. **The Thinking Rock**

31. Pāc Rāüt monastery
32. Rājmaḍh/Jummā mosque
33. Sarvatīrtha
34. Saiyad Sādāt Walī shrine
35. Mālhaṇdevī Gate
36. Cillaye Gausa Piyā shrine
37. Belora Gate
38. The Māṅgs' well
39. Darbheśvar temple
40. Bandeśvar temple
41. Mahākālī temple
42. He Gives a Baby to an Old Woman
43. He Covers a Baby with a Double Water Bag
44. He Is Offered *tulasī*
45. He Makes Worms Become Brahman
46. Rest House (*śāḷā*)
47. Kājīpurā mosque
48. Bus stand
49. Village Paṇcāyat building
50. Bāhādurpurā mosque/Śāha Ḍholā Miyā shrine
51. Kheḍ Gate
52. Jamadagni temple
53. Kolhārāī temple
54. Government dispensary
55. Urdu school
56. Śāha Ālam Miyā shrine (*dargā*)
57. Measure-Breaking Gaṇapati temple
58. Marāṭhī school
59. The Stack-of-Pots well (utaraṇḍīcī vihīr)
60. Bālājī temple (non-Mahānubhāv)
61. Cipaḍāī temple
62. Rām temple (non-Mahānubhāv)
63. Mhāĩṃbhaṭ's Shop

64. Māruti temple
65. The Hoḷikā Festival *sthān*
66. Deshpande's compound: audumbar tree
67. Jain ruins
68. Śeṅguḷa-Buḍaḍē (first meeting of Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāüḷ)
    A) Cakradhar
    B) Guṇḍam Rāüḷ
69. Yaśvantbābā Darbār (non-Mahānubhāv)
70. Talābpurā mosque
71. Koherīpurā Māruti temple (non-Mahānubhāv)
72. Buddhist *vihār* (modern)
73. The *sthān* in the Potters' Quarter
74. Jalālīpurā mosque
75. The Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law well
76. Pīr shrine
77. Dābherī Gate



MAP 2: THE EIGHT JAYĀS

MAP BY S. Y. WAGHMARE

NOTES

[1]The visits, and the research on which this paper is based, were made possible by grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Arizona State University. I am grateful for the support of these organizations. An earlier draft of this paper was presented to members of the Religious Studies Department and the Center for Asian Studies at Arizona State University; I am grateful for their interest and comments.

[2]*Nārāyaṇavyāsa Bahāḷiye-Kṛta Śrī Ṛddhipuravarṇana*, edited by S.G. Tulpule (Pune: Suvicāra Prakāśana Maṇḍaḷa, 1967), and *Śrī Ṛddhipūravarṇana*, edited by Y.K. Deshpande (Yavatmal, 1929); *Sthāna Pothī*, edited by V.B. Kolte (Malkapur: Aruṇa Prakāśana, 1976); and *Kavī Kṛṣṇamunī Ḍimbhaviracita Śrī Ṛddhipura-Māhātmya*, ed. Y.M. Pathan (Solapur: Prācīna Sāhitya Prakāśana, 1967). As there is no published edition of Maheśvarpaṇḍit's *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*, I have used a photographed copy of a manuscript in the collection of the Marathi Department of Marathwada University, Aurangabad. Dr. S.G. Tulpule has read all these texts, except the *Sthān Pothī*, with me; I am extremely grateful for his help.

[3]The other two are Cāṅgdev Rāūḷ (Guṇḍam Rāūḷ's *guru*, and a previous incarnation of Cakradhar) and Dattātreya.

[4]For a general introduction to the history and teachings of the Mahānubhāv sect, see I.M.P. Raeside, "The Mahānubhāvas," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 39 (1976): 585-600. See also Raeside, "A Bibliographical Index of Mahānubhāva Works in Marathi," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 23 (1960): 464-507.

[5]The *Sūtrapāṭha*, the collection of Cakradhar's aphorisms, includes several *sūtras* recommending *smaraṇa*: IX.4; XII.27-28, 30, 32; XIII.46, 47, 186, and 246. See A. Feldhaus, *The Religious System of the Mahānubhāva Sect: The Mahānubhāva Sūtrapāṭha* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 64-65. On *smaraṇa* in Sanskrit aesthetics and *bhakti* literature, see Barbara Stoler Miller, "The Divine Duality of Rādhā and Krishna," in *The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India*, edited by John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1982), pp. 13-26.

[6]The biography of Cakradhar is the *Līḷācaritra*, edited by V.B. Kolte (Bombay: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya-Saṃskṛti Maṇḍaḷa, 1978; 2nd edition, 1982), and by S.G. Tulpule (five volumes. Pune: Suvicāra Prakāśana Maṇḍaḷa, 1964-67). It is being translated into English by S.G. Tulpule and G.-D. Sontheimer. The biography of Guṇḍam Rāūḷ is *Śrī Govindaprabhu Caritra*, edited by V.B. Kolte (Malkapur: Aruṇa Prakāśana, 1944; fifth edition, 1972). It has been translated into English as *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur*, translated by Anne Feldhaus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[7]The *Sthān Pothī*, even more than other Mahānubhāv texts, appears to be the work of several generations of authors and editors. Raeside, in "A Bibliographical Index," p. 501, suggests that the text was "perhaps first drawn up in something like its present form by MUNIVYĀSA round about 1400."

[8]Mahant Śrī Dattarāj Śevalīkar, Mahānubhāv, *Sthāna-Mārga-Darśaka* (Ghogargāv, 1970).

[9]Raeside ("A Bibliographical Index," p. 494) dates this work tentatively to 1363 A.D. It is dated to approximately 1418 A.D. in S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature from the Beginning to A.D. 1818*. A History of Indian Literature, edited by Jan Gonda, Volume IX, Fascicle 4 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979), p. 338.

[10]The word *oṭā* is used generally in Marāṭhī for a raised platform of earth, stone, or brick: for example, an earthen or stone verandah, or the walled mass of earth which is sometimes built up around the bottom of a tree. The statement that the Mahānubhāv *oṭās* are aniconic will be qualified below, in section III.

[11]Mahant Gopīrāj Mahānubhāv, Ṛddhipur, July 1, 1983.

[12]June 28-29, 1982.

[13]A frequently-used synonym for *śakti* is *sāmarthya*.

[14]According to one informant, *māyā śakti* has the more "pragmatic" effects, and *kṛpā śakti* the more "transcendent." For a thorough discussion of *śakti* theory in Mahānubhāv theology, see V.B. Kolte, *Mahānubhāva Tattvajñāna* (Malkapur: Aruṇa Prakāśana, 1945; fourth edition, 1975), and V.B. Kolte, *Mahānubhāvāṃcā Ācāradharma* (Malkapur: Aruṇa Prakāśana, 1948; reprinted, 1973).

[15]Accounts vary greatly as to the exact size of the group, but agree in suggesting that it included more than a hundred people.

[16]Again accounts vary, but the claim seems to be that this was a matter of six miles—or eight, or twelve—in each direction. The area and boundaries of Ṛddhipur can be understood in a number of different ways.

[17]Mahant Pāc Rāüt Bābā Mahānubhāv, Ṛddhipur, June 26, 1983.

[18]Mādhavrāj Panjābī, Amrāvatī, July 7, 1982. The Collector is a high administrative official of the government.

[19]Non-Mahānubhāv residents of Ṛddhipur do take a kind of civic pride in their town's most famous citizen; and the Mahānubhāv pilgrimage trade surely has an economic impact on the village as a whole.

[20]Kṛṣṇamuni, *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*, verses 323-330; cf. Maheśvarpaṇḍit, *Ṛddhipur Māhātmya*, verses 134-149.

[21]Kṛṣṇamuni, verses 331-380; Maheśvarpaṇḍit, verses 151-213.

[22]Kṛṣṇamuni, verses 410-438; cf. Maheśvarpaṇḍit, verse 227.

[23]Kṛṣṇamuni, verses 441-589; Maheśvarpaṇḍit, 227-242. *Cf. Līḷācaritra*, "Uttarārdha," chapters 145-46.

[24]Only laymen, not monks, volunteered this information; one monk was horrified at the thought that Ṛddhipur had ever been called Rudhirpur.

[25]People listing the names of Ṛddhipur sometimes add that the British were perfectly correct to call the place Rithpur—a name which in Marāṭhī means "Emptytown" or "Nowheresville"—because by British times, as now, Ṛddhipur was something of a tumble-down wreck.

[26]Verses 173-275.

[27]Kṛṣṇamuni, verses 173-242, 251-257.

[28]For more on the "religious archaeology," see below, section III.

[29]See Anne Feldhaus, "The *devatācakra* of the Mahānubhāvas," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 43 (1980): 101-09. Dattātreya is both a Hindu god and (in the one-headed but not the three-headed form) a Mahānubhāv *avatāra* of Parameśvara.

[30]Verses 123-130, 309.

[31]*rīdhapura mhaṇaje kāsīṃ nīvāsu. Śrī Govindaprabhu Caritra*, chapter 94.

[32]*Ibid.*, translated in *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur*, chapter 213.

[33]Verses 639-694.

[34]In Maheśvarpaṇḍit's text, much is made of the hierophanic nature of Lakṣmīndrabhaṭ's vision—particularly through comparisons with Arjuna's vision of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

[35]For other ways in which Kṛṣṇa's role as a Mahānubhāv incarnation serves to link Mahānubhāvs with the broader Hindu tradition, see Anne Feldhaus, "Kṛṣṇa and the Kṛṣṇas: Kṛṣṇa in the Mahānubhāv Pantheon," in *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979-1982*, edited by Monika Thiel-Horstmann (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1983), pp. 133-142.

[36]Mahānubhāvs would distinguish this Kṛṣṇa image from a Hindu *mūrti* by saying that theirs is not the god or a dwelling of the god, but merely a representation intended to call the god to mind. Such Mahānubhāv images often contain—or are carved out of—a stone understood to have been touched by one of the incarnations.

[37]Some say that Mahānubhāvs worship this Māruti from the back because it is the back which had the contact (*saṃbandh*) of an incarnation of Parameśvara, while others suggest that they do not want even to appear to worship an actively-worshipped Hindu deity. One Mahānubhāv layman stated that

Mahānubhāvs go around to the back because they are afraid to look straight at the Māruti, which is a rather large image (about eight feet tall), completely covered with the usual red-lead

38 The mark is referred to as an *ūrddhvapuṇḍra*. At Paṇcāḷeśvar, another Mahānubhāv pilgrimage place, I was told that this is the mark used by Jaṭādharas, Dattātreya *sannyāsīs*.

39Colleagues at the Toronto conference pointed out that although goddesses are an element of village Hinduism in Maharashtra, directional-guardian deities may well not be. That is, while the Jayās individually may originally have been village goddesses, bringing them together as a set and assigning them to the eight directions may have served to assimilate Ṛddhipur to the paradigm of a major Hindu pilgrimage place (See section II, above). See, for example, Diana Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), pp. 186-87, 294-96.

In Nepal, according to Niels Gutschow, "Mātṛkās are one of the most essential devices for the sanctification of Nepalese towns. Preferably they are arranged so as to surround settlements—ideally in a pattern where the four cardinal and the four intermediate points of the compass are each marked by a shrine. Hence, in Nepal they are invariably eight in number." ("Ritual as Mediator of Space: Kāṭhmāṇḍu," *Ekistiks* 265 (December, 1977), p. 310.) See also N. Gutschow and B. Kölver, *Ordered Space—Concepts and Functions in a Town in Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1975); B. Kölver, "A Ritual Map from Nepal," in *Folia Rara* (Festschrift W. Voigt) (Wiesbaden: 1976); and J. Pieper, "Three Cities of Nepal," in *Shelter, Sign and Symbol*, edited by Paul Oliver (London: 1975), pp. 52-70.

40Verse 250.

41For example, Borjaī, on p. 87 of Kolte's edition; and Cuḍjaī (=Tuḷjaī) and Beljaī, on p. 38 of the edition prepared by Mādhavrāj Panjābī (Amrāvatī: Mahānubhāva Viśvabhāratī Prakāśana, n.d.).

42At the Toronto conference, Professor Charlotte Vaudeville pointed out that there is a connection in North India between Jain ascetics and the full-moon day of Āṣāḍh. See mention of this in her "The Govardhan Myth in Northern India," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 22 (1980), p. 8. The whole question of the relations between early Mahānubhāvs and Jains needs to be examined carefully. There are some partially excavated Jain ruins in Ṛddhipur (number 67 on map 1), some mention of Jain temples (*vasais*) in the *Līḷācaritra* and the *Sthān Pothī* and several striking similarities (mostly deriving from a common emphasis on *ahiṃsā*, "non-violence") between Jain and Mahānubhāv practice.

43Tuḷjaī, to the west of Ṛddhipur on the Cāndur Bāzār Road

44Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, *Birobā, Mhaskobā, und Khaṇḍobā: Ursprung, Geschichte und Umwelt von Pastoralen Gottheiten in Mahārāṣṭra* (Wiesbaden:

Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1976), pp. 162-69; and "The Dhangars: A Nomadic Pastoral Community in a Developing Agricultural Environment," in *Pastoralists and Nomads in South Asia*, edited by L.S. Leshnik and G.D. Sontheimer (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 153-59.

[45]Charlotte Vaudeville, "The Cowherd-God in Ancient India," in *Pastoralists and Nomads in South Asia*, pp. 105, 112-114; "Braj, Lost and Found," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 18 (1976), pp. 206-08; and "Krishna Gopāla, Rādhā, and The Great Goddess," in *The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India*, pp. 1-12.

[46]Other prominent features of the non-Mahānubhāv religious life of Ṛddhipur include an *āśram* called the Yaśvantbābā Darbār (number 69 on map 1), and, in the courtyard of a Brāhman's house (number 66), a miraculous audumbar tree whose fame has reached non-Mahānubhāvs as far away as Pune.

[47]V.B. Kolte, "Tārīkhe Amajadī āṇi Mahānubhāva," in V.B. Kolte, *Mahānubhāva Saṃśodhana: 1* (Malkapur: Aruṇa Prakāśana, 1962), pp. 158-59.

[48]See V.B. Kolte, "Mahānubhāva va Jijhiyā Kara," in *Mahānubhāva Saṃśodhana: 1*, pp. 137-45, and "Tārīkhe Amajadī āṇi Mahānubhāva," pp. 146-59.

[49]*yā rājamaṭhāce mālaka harī rāja guru dattarāja mahaṃta bīḍakara. yā bhiṃtīsa kharca ru.* 500 *jālā. tā.* 2-8-1902.

[50]In his *City as Symbol* (London: H. K. Lewis and Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 10, Paul Wheatley cites Bernard-Phillippe Groslier's use of the image, but not the word. Diana Eck used the image and the word in a paper delivered at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in New York in 1979.

The Social Ideologies of Hagiography: Śaṅkara, Tukārām and Kabīr

by DAVID N. LORENZEN

Hagiographical accounts of the lives of Hindu religious leaders and thinkers exist in abundant quantity in many Indian languages. This literature has attracted comparatively little scholarly interest, probably because it generally contains very little historical data worthy of credence. The literature is mostly a product of the sects to which these charismatic figures belonged, or which were established in their names. Since the texts are cast in the form of biographies, they necessarily describe the social behaviour of these figures and in the process often reveal a great deal about the social vision of their authors.

The hagiography of Śaṅkara, Kabīr and Tukārām originate in Hindu sects whose respective followers on average belong to very different social strata. Not suprisingly, the texts embody very different social ideologies. Śaṅkara is rightfully regarded as a Brahmin's Brahmin, the maximum representative of the all-India orthodox metaphysical tradition based on the Vedic Upaniṣads. Tukārām, on the other hand, is the most popular of the religious poet-singers of Maharashtra, a proponent of a devotional tradition stemming back through Jñānadev to the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Finally, Kabīr, the Muslim weaver and poet-singer of Benares, embodies the best of a related but quite different devotional tradition, whose followers come mostly from lower Hindu castes. In their compositions each of these major figures expressed a world vision, at once both religious and social, of man's place in the universe, his

relation to God and to other men, which found and continues to find a place in the hearts of their followers. In this paper I want to discuss the more social aspects of the world visions of Śaṅkara, Tukārām and Kabīr, particularly as interpreted by the authors of the hagiographical accounts of their lives. The social ideologies of these authors are not, of course, necessarily identical with those of their subjects. Nonetheless, these authors do generally sound the ideological notes which produced the greatest resonance among the followers of each of these religious leaders.

In his major works, those agreed to be genuinely his, Śaṅkara has little to say about matters which directly pertain to social relations. He does, however, largely accept the orthodox Brahmanical theodicy of *karma* and *saṃsāra* which in fact embodies a conservative social ideology heavily skewed in favour of the higher *varṇas*. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* v.10.8, a direct statement on this theodicy, simply repeats the meaning of the text: "Those who have pleasing conduct will attain a pleasing birth(*yoni*): one without cruelty, etc., either a birth as a Brahmin or a birth as a Kṣatriya, or a birth as a Vaiśya, according to their karma. Moreover, those who, to the contrary, have karma characterized by foul conduct will attain a foul birth : either a birth as a dog or a pig or a Caṇḍāla, according to their karma."[1] Likewise, in his commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* iv.13, Śaṅkara seems to accept without question its presentation of the traditional account of the creation of the four *varṇas*: "The four *varṇas*...were created by me, i.e. by Iśvara,...according to the distribution of *guṇas* and karma. The *guṇas* are goodness (*sattva*), passions (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*)...The Brahmin, whose essence is primarily goodness, has karma of 'restraint, control and inner heat (*tapas*)' etc. The Kṣatriya, whose essence is primarily passion and secondarily goodness, has karma of 'valor, energy' etc. The Vaiśya, whose essence is primarily passion and secondarily ignorance, has karma of 'agriculture etc.' The Śūdra, whose essence is primarily ignorance and secondarily passion, has karma of service."[2]

With regards to the creation of the specific castes (*jātis*), Śaṅkara seems again to follow the traditional theory that they originate in the offspring of unions between persons of the different varṇas. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* iv.3.22 states that in the state of deep sleep: "a thief is not a thief, a Brahmin killer (*bhrūṇahan*) not a Brahmin killer, a Cāṇḍāla not a Cāṇḍāla, a Paulkasa not a Paulkasa,

a monk (*śramaṇa*) not a monk, and an ascetic (*tāpasa*) not an ascetic." Śaṅkara comments that "thus the Cāṇḍāla is freed not only from his current (*pratyutpanna*) karma, but also he is even freed from the innate [karma] that causes his extremely low birth(*jāti*)." The Cāṇḍāla is explained as "being born of a Śūdra father and a Brahmin mother," while the Paulkasa is "born of a Śūdra father and a Kṣatriya mother."

Most revealing, however, are the passages in which Śaṅkara discusses the non-eligibility of Śūdras for Brahma-knowledge. In Śaṅkara's commentary of *Brahma-sūtras* i.3.34-38, his hypothetical opponent (*pūrva-pakṣin*) maintains that Śūdras as well as twice born men have a claim to knowledge (*vidyā*), "because there is a possibility of their requesting it and of their being capable of it, and because there is no injunction in *śruti* which says 'therefore the Śūdra is unfit for knowledge,' such as that which says, 'therefore the Śūdra is unfit for sacrifice.'"[3] The *pūrvapakṣin* also mentions the apparent references to the royal disciple of the sage Raikva as a Śūdra (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* iv.2.3 and 5) and the reference in *smṛti* texts to the great wisdom of persons born of Śūdra mothers such as Vidūra. Śaṅkara in his reply explicitly admits the possibility of a Śūdra requesting knowledge and being capable of it. The Śūdra is ineligible, he says, since "the Śūdra has no study of the Veda, because study of the Veda has as a prerequisite the ceremony of initiation (*upanayana*)," for which the Śūdra is ineligible. Śaṅkara then argues that Raikva's disciple cannot have been a Śūdra and must have been a Kṣatriya. With regard to arguments based on *smṛti* he cites passages which prohibit Śūdras from hearing and studying the Veda. He does, however, admit the existence of exceptions such as Vidūra and the *dharma*-hunter and also admits the right of Śūdras to acquire knowledge of the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, but not the Veda. The explanation for exceptions such as Vidūra is a curious one. Śaṅkara says that in these cases "the attainment of knowledge (*jñnotpatti*) stems from the power of the influence of the karmic traces (*saṃskāra*) of former deeds." He adds that "it is not possible to prohibit these [persons] acquisition of the fruit [of that knowledge] since the fruit of knowledge is invariable."

In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* iii.5.1 and iv.5.15, he carries this argument one step further and insists that only Brahmins have a right to become ascetics (*sannyāsins*), a view not shared by his disciple and sub-commentator Sureśvara. Since

sannyāsa is, in practical terms, a prerequisite for Brahma knowledge, Śaṅkara is here virtually limiting the possibility of salvation to the Brahmins alone.

In these discussions Śaṅkara is talking principally about everyday (***vyāvahārika***) reality, and the views he expresses are those of an intelligent but socially conservative traditional Brahmin: one who recognizes the intellectual and psychological capacity of non-Brahmins, and even Śūdras, to achieve Brahma-knowledge and hence salvation from saṃsāra, but disqualifies them on technical grounds. The Śūdra cannot have Brahma-knowledge because he is prohibited from receiving an initiation ceremony and therefore from studying the Vedas. Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas are technically eligible for Brahma-knowledge but their ineligibility for ***sannyāsa*** puts it practically beyond their reach.

Śaṅkara's traditional social ideology may be compatible with the functional (***vyāvahārika***) reality of everyday experience, but it clearly becomes irrelevant from the point of view of the supreme truth (***paramārthataḥ***) as he conceives it, namely that the ultimate reality is a state in which the functional reality of saṃsāra is superceded or ablated by the unitary Brahman. In such a state, or reality; social distinctions obviously have no place. The ***Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*** (iv.3.22) passage quoted above eliminates such distinctions even from the state of deep sleep, a state just one step below Brahman according to Śaṅkara, and Śaṅkara seems to accept this judgement. His famous discussion of superimposition (***adhyāsa***) in his introduction to the ***Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*** states quite clearly that social attributes such as caste are ultimately unreal. Here he notes that the determination of who is qualified to perform the Vedic sacrifices "does not depend on the wisdom of the Vedānta, [which describes] the reality of the Self as above hunger, etc., above the divisions of Brahmin and Ksatriya, above [any connection with] saṃsāra."[4]

The Sanskrit hagiographies of Śaṅkara seem to fall basically into two categories: those associated with the monastic centers at Śṛṅgerī, on the one hand, and at Kāñcī, on the other. As far as published sources are concerned, the ***Śaṅkaravijaya*** of Anantānandagiri seems to be virtually the only important text associated with the Kāñcī center. The basic text of the Śṛṅgerī school is the ***Śaṅkaradigvijaya*** or ***Saṅkṣepa-Śaṅkarajaya*** of Mādhava. This work seems to have been compiled, using verses

from a number of earlier texts, sometime between about 1650 and 1800 and was possibly reworked about the middle of the nineteenth century.[5] It is now generally accepted as authoritative by Śaṅkara's monastic followers. For this present essay I will concern myself exclusively with this text.

What is perhaps most striking about Śaṅkara's social relations as portrayed in Mādhava's text is that they are almost exclusively with other Brahmins or, in one or two cases, with learned Jain monks of unspecified caste background. Śaṅkara also confronts the leaders of several heretical Hindu sects such as the Kāpālikas, however, whose caste is not specified but may have been non-Brahmin. His only significant contacts with women are with his mother and the wife of Maṇḍana Miśra, Ubhayabhāratī. Nonetheless, one of the thematic motifs of the texts seems to be a socio-religious dialogue between feminine symbols of domestic life and worship of Viṣṇu on the one hand and masculine symbols of ascetic renunciation and the worship of Śiva on the other.[6]

The episode of Ubhayabhāratī is particularily interesting from the point of view of social ideology. Ubhayabhāratī is a woman and as such traditionally has no right to Vedic knowledge. Nonetheless she challenges Śaṅkara to a theological debate and holds him to a draw for seventeen days. At the time of issuing her challenge Śaṅkara objects that (9.59): "'Noble persons do not discuss [such matters] with women'." Ubhayabhāratī answers his objection with an appeal to Upaniṣadic tradition (9.60-61):

> Sir, those devoted to the preservation of their own doctrine should strive to defeat whoever strives to break that doctrine, whether that person is a woman or not. For this reason the great *muni* Yājñavalkya disputed with Gārgī and Janaka with the lady Sulabhā. Were they not noble men?

According to Mādhava, Śaṅkara is pleased with Ubhayabhāratī's reply and consents to initiate the long debate. After seventeen days Ubhayabhāratī decides she must shift the subject of the debate to a topic in which she holds a decisive advantage, that of love and sex. There follows a curious episode in which Śaṅkara asks for a recess during which he abandons his own body and enters that of the dead king Amaruka in order to learn this field of knowledge prohibited to a sannyāsin. This story is clearly based on that of Gorakhnāth and his guru Matsyendranāth, as Mādhava's text in fact implicitly recognizes (9.79-88). Like Matsyendranāth, Śaṅkara as king is eventually rescued from the snares of the flesh by his disciples and

returns to his own body and to the debate with Ubhayabhāratī. At this point the story takes a turn which largely vitiates the liberal social ethic implied by Śaṅkara's willingness to debate with a woman. Ubhayabhāratī, as is earlier related in chapter three of Mādhava's work, is really no other than an incarnation of the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī. Śaṅkara himself is said to be an incarnation of Śiva. When he returns, Ubhayabhāratī says (10.67):

> When you defeated me in the assembly and acted so as to become enlightened in the arts of love of the Kāma-śāstra, [you were merely] playing the part of engaging in human behaviour.

She acknowledges defeat without further debate and then returns to Brahmaloka leaving her husband, Maṇḍana, to take the vows of a sannyāsin and become Śaṅkara's disciple. This rather anticlimactic end to the episode seems to reflect the uneasiness of the orthodox Brahman authors of the text when faced with the very idea of a woman as an erudite metaphysician.

A similar narrative structure and theme appear in the one episode (6.20-52) in which Śaṅkara confronts an Untouchable (*śvapaca*). One day, while Śaṅkara is staying at Banaras, he meets an untouchable hunter, who approaches with his four dogs. He is ordered to stand to one side to let Śaṅkara and his disciples pass by. Instead the hunter makes a cogent theological objection (6.28):

> [When you say that] I should move out of the way, O sage, do you wish to keep away the body or the soul? How [can one body] consisting of matter be distinguished from [another body also] consisting of matter? And [how can one] witnessing [Self be distinguished] from [another] witnessing [Self], O ascetic? How can you associate with the Self the thought of a difference between a Brahmin and an Untouchable (*śvapaca*)? When the sun is reflected in the Ganges and in [a pot] of wine, there is no difference [in the thing itself].

Śaṅkara acknowledges the truth of the Untouchable's remarks and says (6.34): "'He who has firm intelligence and constantly views the whole world as being based on the Ātman is worthy of praise, whether he is a Brahmin or an Untouchable (*śvapaca*).'" Just as Śaṅkara finishes praising him, however, the Untouchable reveals himself as none other than Śiva himself and the four dogs as the four Vedas. As in the Ubhayabharātī story the liberal, even radical, social implications of the encounter are buried in the miracle of the godly incarnation. Nonetheless there does remain, at least on a theoretical level, the recognition of some sort of innate human equality existing within, or behind, the hierarchical social order,

even in the writings and traditions associated with this intellectual exemplar of Brahmanic orthodoxy.

From several points of view the Vārakarī-sampradāy of Maharashtra is the most complex and interesting of the major devotional movements in medieval India. Historically it leads backward to the Nāths through the spiritual geneology of Jñānadev and forward to the north Indian *sant* tradition of Kabīr and Nānak through Nāmādev. It also has associations with the Mahānubhāv-sampradāy, Datta-sampradāy, Samartha-sampradāy and other religious movements within and even outside the region. Sociologically, the Vārakarī movement has recruited both its followers and leaders from an unusually wide range of castes, although Brahmins seem to have predominated among the leaders and middle to low "clean" castes among the followers. Religiously, the movement is firmly anchored in Jñānadev's Marathi paraphrase of the classical Sanskrit *Bhagavad-gītā* on the one hand and the devotional outpourings of unlettered poet-singers such as Tukārām on the other.

The predominant social ideology of the Vārakarī-sampradāy is difficult to identify and analyze precisely because of its long and complex history and the wide range of castes which comprise its social base. Is the movement better characterized as the product of a great upsurge of devotional religion among the common people of Maharashtra or as the product of an effort of the upper castes, specifically the Brahmins, to broaden their base of social support through religious reform "from above"? Obviously neither characterization can encompass all the historical and intellectual variety of the movement. Nonetheless, a selective look at the socio-religious ideology implicit and explicit in the songs of Tukārām and in the hagiographies of his life written by Mahipati will, I think, show that this ideology is more compatible with the model of reform "from above" than with that of a popular upsurge "from below."

Tukārām (1607-49) is clearly a man of the common people, an almost illiterate shopkeeper of the Śūdra *varṇa* and Kuṇbī *jāti*. If Tukārām's caste rank is compared to that of the other leading figures in the history of the Vārakarī-sampradāy, he must be placed among those at the lower end of the scale. In a list of twenty-one of the leaders of the movement given by Deleury, ten are Brahmins, nine non-Brahmins, and two of uncertain caste origin.[7] Of the non-Brahmins only one, Cokhāmeḷā, is clearly an Untouchable (Mahār).

Two of the Brahmins are women as are two of the non-Brahmins. Somewhat similar caste and sex distributions are met in the earlier devotional movements of the twelve Alvārs and the sixty-four Nāyanārs of Tamilnadu, movements whose social ideologies tend to resemble that of the Vārakarī-sampradāy.

In spite of his lack of formal education, Tukārām is surely one of the greatest religious poets of India. In terms of his poetic imagination, particularily his use of visual images and metaphors, he probably ranks above all others, even Mīrā, Kabīr and Sūr-dās. Only rarely, however, does he direct his brilliant imagination and intellect to subjects which have an obvious social content. He is a poet ecstatically in love with God and little interested in the things of this world. Nonetheless a few of his songs, particularily those with autobiographical content, do express sentiments with social relevance. For Tukārām, perhaps the greatest single religious virtue is humility before God and his devotees (*sants*). Even Tukārām's low birth becomes a virtue since it saves him from pride[8]:

> It's good you made me a Kuṇbī.
> If not, I'd have died of the shame
> *You've done right, Lord God*
> *Dancing, Tukā touches your feet.*
>
> If I had had learning,
> it would have held me back.
>
> I'd have failed to serve the saints.
> For nothing I'd be ruined
>
> I'd be stiff with pride.
> I'd have gone down the path to death.
>
> Greatness, says Tukā, causes one
> to go to hell through pride.

If humility is the greatest virtue, then obviously pride is the greatest defect, whether it be pride of birth or pride of learning. Tukārām does not hesitate to attack those who claim religious authority on the basis of birth or learning without sincere devotion to God[9]:

> If you become a *paṇḍit*, you'll recite the Purāṇas;
> But you won't know who you are.
>
> You'll turn the pages of a donkey's load of books;
> But you won't learn what only a guru can teach.

Tukā is a Kuṇbī's son. He doesn't know the scriptures
But there's one thing he never lets go of:
the Lord of Paṇḍharī

Whereas for Śaṅkara Vedic learning and hence a high, preferably Brahmin birth are necessary prerequisites for salvation, for Tukārām they are irrelevant and even hinderances to salvation. Nonetheless, his dedication to humility and piety is not compatible with an aggressively critical social and religious vision such as that purveyed by Kabīr. More typical of Tukārām's attitude is a well-known song in which he cites the example of a number of famous *sants* to show the irrelevance of caste to religious qualification and merit[10]:

Holy is the family, pure is the land
in which Hari's servants are born.

One whose* karma *and* dharma *are Nārāyaṇa
purifies all three worlds.

Tell me: who has ever turned pure
through pride of caste?

Those of all castes, from the lowest-born on,
are saved by devotion to Hari.
The Purāṇas are their bards.

The Vaiśya Tuḷādhār, the potter Gorā,
and Rohidās the stitcher of shoes,

The Momīn Kabīr, the Muslim Latif,
and Senā the barber—all were servants of Viṣṇu.

Kānhopātrā, or Khodu, or Dādu the carder of cotton—
at Hari's feet, all are the same in devotion.

Chokhāmeḷā and Vaṅkā were Mahārs by caste,
but God made them one with himself.

Nāmā's maidservant Janī had such great faith
that Paṇḍharī's King used to eat with her.

Mairāḷā Janak came from the lowest of homes,
but his glory is hard to describe.

Among Viṣṇu's servants there are no distinctions of caste
—this is what the Vedas teach.

Tukā says, look in your books:
innumerable low ones have been saved.

The theodicy advocated by Tukārām, and most of the other Vārakarī *sants* as well, is one typical of the sects which draw their

support from a middle range of castes. He accepts the classical justification of suffering and good fortune through the operation of karma in repeated births, but denies the necessity of acquiring Vedic wisdom to escape saṃsāra and win salvation. For salvation the grace (*prasāda*) of God is sufficient. The path to acquiring this grace is devotion (*bhakti*) and self-surrender (*prapatti*) to God. Somewhat in the manner of Protestant Christianity, this emphasis on grace largely eliminates any need for the Hindu equivalent of a church, namely the corps of orthodox Brahmins trained in the Veda, and seems to open the way to a direct relation between the worshipper and his God. In one striking song Tukārām even rejects salvation through all manner of sacrifices, vows, and ascetic practices as well as through Vedic wisdom:[11]

> In cold and heat, in forests and caves,
> practice yogic postures and trance.
> Not asceticism, not pilgrimages, not alms, vows,and sacrifices;
> nor the many philosophical views —
> none of these save you from pleasure and pain,
> from birth, age, misery, disease.
> Keep desire, anger, and pride in control,
> and win the Indestructible in this state of life.
>
> Memorizing the Vedas will make you proud;
> you'll be haunted by rules and restrictions.
> Making arguments, you'll have to criticize;
> this fault will become a permanent crust.
> Says Tukā, accomplishment is the root of sin.
> Let go of your false shame.
> Take refuge in the saints with all your heart,
> then live in any state you please.

The religion of Tukārām nonetheless stops far short of dispensing with the need for the Brahmin priesthood altogether. The *bhakti* it advocates is directed towards an anthropomorphic (*saguṇa*) deity, namely Viṭṭhal-Kṛṣṇa enshrined at Paṇḍharpur. Intellectually it is grounded in the devotional theology of the *Bhagavad-gītā* as interpreted by Jñānadev. Although the classical mythology of the Sanskrit Purāṇas is not emphasized—as it is in the poems of Sūr-dās, Tulasī-dās, the followers of Chaitanya and others—neither is it rejected, as it is in the *nirguṇa* tradition associated with Kabīr. Brahmins remain in charge of the temple at Paṇḍharpur, and Brahmin *purohits* serve as family priests in most of the castes from which the Vārakarīs come. In addition, classical Sanskrit

theological traditions, including knowledge of the schools of Vedānta, has reached and pervaded the Vārakarī-sampradāy through the teachings of learned Brahmin *sants* such as Jñānadev and Ekanāth. The Brahmins and their Sanskritic Great Tradition in fact remain the ultimate arbiters of religious vision of the movement.

The respect paid to the Brahmins and their religious traditions in the Vārakarī-sampradāy are evident in Mahipati's (1715-1790) hagiographical lives of Tukārām and other *sants*. Mahipati himself was a Deśastha Brahmin well-educated in Sanskrit. He wrote his lengthy hagiographies in Marathi, however, basing himself on the *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās (*c.* 1600), a work by Uddhavachidghan of Mandesh, and other sources. In spite of having come from a Brahmin family, he is sharply critical of exaggerated caste consciousness and practices based on the ideas of pollution and untouchability. Like Ekanāth and other Brahmin *sants* of the Vārakarī-sampradāy, he is best described as an elite reformer.[12] The life of Tukārām appears in his *Bhaktavijay* (1762) and in his *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774), both of which have been translated into English.[13]

The principal themes of Tukārām's life as interpreted by Mahipati are those of his overwhelming generosity and humility, especially towards Brahmins, and, of course, his deep devotion to Viṭṭhal of Paṇḍharpur. Tukārām's generosity stems basically from his religious detachment from the things of this world, but also reflects a naïve gullibility directly counter to the usual stereotype of the greedy shopkeeper. This generosity, and gullibility, time and again brings economic hardship on him and his family, causes the ruin of the family business, and shares the responsibility with a general famine for the death of the elder of Tukārām's two wives and their son. It is also the principal cause of the constant conflict between Tukārām and his shrewish second wife. Tukārām's great devotion to Viṭṭhal, on the other hand, eventually earns him economic as well as religious well-being. It is also, however, a constant source of friction, not only with his wife but also with orthodox Brahmins, frequently described as greedy and hypocritical, who resent his usurpation of their monopoly as religious teachers. In each encounter with his Brahmin opponents, Tukārām's generosity and humility—sometimes with an assist from a minor miracle—eventually wins them to his side. Even his wife sometimes becomes reconciled to his religious vocation.

One of the best known episodes of Tukārām's life, that of his songs being thrown into the river, highlights several important aspects of the Vārakarīs' socio-religious ideology. It is found in both the *Bhaktavijay* and the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* and seems to be alluded to in one of Tukārām's songs.[14] In the more detailed version of the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, a learned orthodox Brahman named Rāmeśvar Bhaṭṭa becomes angry at Tukārām's increasing fame and makes a charge against him to the ruling official of Pune[15]:

> Tuka was of the *shūdra* caste, and yet was publicly preaching the substance of the *Vedas*. 37. Moreover by performing *Harikirtans* he has seduced pious people, so that even Brahmins make him a *namaskar* 38. He puts aside all other rules of duty, and emphasizes the all importance of repeating God's names. He has developed the path of *bhakti*, which seems to me heretical.

When Tukārām is brought before Rāmeśvar this jealous Brahmin forbids him to continue to recite his songs. Tukārām accepts Rāmeśvar's injunction without question: "'You are a Brahmin, the image of God. You have commanded me, and henceforth I will never repeat my verses.'" Tukā also agrees to throw his existing manuscripts in the Indrayani River. After doing so he falls into despair and decides to fast to death at the door of the local temple of Viṣṇu, rather like a money-lender who fasts at the door of his debtor (the practice called *prāyopaveśa*). The God finally responds to his distress, and after thirteen days the manuscripts reappear undamaged floating in the river. Meanwhile Rāmeśvar is cursed by a Muslim fakir for disturbing his meditation. The curse causes Rāmeśvar's body to burn painfully, but he is too proud to ask for the fakir's forgiveness: "I am of the highest caste a Brahmin, and this fakir is Muhammadan, of low caste. I certainly will not go to him.'"[16] The burning continues and Rāmeśvar goes to Alandi to pray at the tomb of the Brahmin Vārakarī, Jñāneśvar. Jñāneśvar tells him, in a dream, to ask for Tukārām's forgiveness. Rāmeśvar sends a letter to Tukārām, and Tukārām sends back to him a song he composes for the occasion. The final verse says: "If there is one feeling towards all, if there is love of others more than for one's self, God (Hari) will look on such with the eye of mercy and in the heart there will be an experience of it."[17] When Rāmeśvar reads this song the burning immediately vanishes. He goes to visit Tukārām and asks to become his disciple.

This story reveals clearly the basic objection of the orthodox Brahmins to the Vārakarī bhakti movement: that it bypasses their traditional professional monopoly in upper caste religion, making

their difficult sacrificial and theological skills largely irrelevant. Tukārām's response is equally revealing: he humbly accepts Rāmeśvar's command to throw away his life's work, notwithstanding his belief that it was divinely commissioned, and then turns to God alone to seek a recompense. When Rāmeśvar seeks his forgiveness, Tukārām characteristically replies with a verse preaching the love of one's fellow man and humility as the path to God's grace. He himself wants no quarrel with the Brahmins.

A somewhat sharper assessment of orthodoxy from the point of view of the Vārakarīs is found in the story of Tukārām's encounter with a Brahmin theologian who was an adherent to the ideas of Mukundarāj's *Vivekasindhu* (1188). This text is believed to be the oldest written in Marathi, and its author is said to a follower of the Nāth Panth.[18] The Brahmin theologian despises Tukārām, thinking: "'If God dwells in the heart, why wander in search of him?'"[19] He wants to recite Mukundarāj's text for Tukārām. Tukārām agrees to listen "in order to show the Brahmin respect." Tukārām wraps himself in a blanket while he listens. The Brahmin reads for several hours but never elicits a comment from Tukārām. Finally the Brahmin lifts up Tukārām's blanket and finds that "he had placed his fingers in his ears, and was wagging his head as he repeated the names of God."[20] The Brahmin is naturally annoyed at this and demands an explanation. Tukārām replies with a criticism of Advaita Vedānta[21]:

> 34. I have adopted the principle of concentrating my thought on the name and form of God..Thereby my heart will become free from desire. And this is the same thing as the 'I am Brahma,' of the philosophy. 35. For this reason I will never listen to the *Advait* doctrine. It would mean the separation between God and his bhakta...40. We are able to comprehend the three Gods, so long as they are *saguṇ* (recognizable through qualities). That is the limit for us. One should not preach the *Advait* doctrine.

The Brahmin realizes the wisdom of Tukārām's remarks and becomes his disciple.

In this passage Tukārām seems to be attempting to turn a common Advaita argument against the Advaitins themselves, an argument with direct social implication. Śaṅkara and the Advaitins claim that different sorts of behaviour are appropriate for persons who have different levels of philosophical understanding. The intellectual elite who aim to acquire liberation through understanding *nirguṇa* Brahman should follow the path of renunciation (*sannyāsa*) and

knowledge (*jñāna*). All others should be content to follow the paths of bhakti to *saguṇa* God and observance of ceremonial duties. These lesser paths cannot lead to final liberation, but they can lead to heaven and a better rebirth.[22] Tukārām says simply that this is not true; *saguṇa* bhakti is the only path to salvation, a path open to all regardless of intellectual and caste qualifications.[23]

Another of Mahipati's stories about Tukārām, this one from the *Bhaktavijay*, contains a strong symbolic criticism of the concept of pollution.[24] One day a coppersmith came to listen to Tukārām's *kīrtan*, leaving his sick son at home. Meanwhile the child died and its embittered mother brought the body to the *kīrtan* and placed it in the middle of the floor. The act upset the audience "as if a begger should begin to eat dainty food and some earth should fall upon it." Tukārām asked the audience to repeat the name "Viṭṭhal, Viṭṭhal" in order to return the dead child to life. As the people chanted the name of God, says Mahipati, they looked at each other and "saw in each one the image of Viṭṭhal. They did not notice the presence of the different castes." The child then revived and its mother praised Tukārām.

Here the highly polluting dead body can be taken as a symbol of pollution in general. When the religious ecstacy of the audience raises them above caste consciousness, the child revives and the pollution vanishes. The implicit social criticism is directed, as is the general rule in Vārakarī texts, exclusively against a *conceptual* aspect of the caste system. As far as *behaviour* is concerned, Tukārām consistently acts basically in accordance with the rules of orthopraxy. Even in the realm of religion he never questions the Brahmins' monopoly of ceremonial functions, or even of exclusive access to the Vedas; he questions only their claim to monopolize the right to preach devotion to God and receive his grace.

Kabīr, the fifteenth century Muslim weaver of Banaras, is the greatest poet-singer of the North Indian *sant* tradition and the maximum personality of what I have elsewhere called the Great Traditions of non-caste Hinduism.[25] His own songs and verses display a proverbially acid social and religious criticism of both Muslims and caste Hindus. Unlike Tukārām and Mahipati, who direct most of their rather tepid socio-religious criticism at *ideas* of the orthodox Brahmins, Kabīr attacks their religious *practices* as well, upbraiding both Muslim *qāzīs* and Brahmin *paṇḍits* with equal sarcastic vigor.

Like Śaṅkara, and unlike Tukārām, Kabīr is a worshipper of a qualityless (*nirguṇa*)—as opposed to quality-endowed (*saguṇa*) or anthropomorphic—divine absolute. Like Tukārām, and unlike Śaṅkara, however, Kabīr believes this divine absolute can be "reached" without resort to the Sanskritic Vedic knowledge reserved for Brahmins. In the *Bījak*, the collection of Kabīr's songs and verses accepted as authoritative by his followers in the Kabīr Panth, Kabīr has this to say about the Brahmin's Vedic texts[26]:

Brother, the Shastras
are the Vedas' daughters.
Out they came, holding the rope.
Men turned it and bound their own throats
with lying allurements, the noose of death.
Once tied they can't get loose,
the whole world lost in sensual forms.
I see the world stripped bt thieves.
Saying Ram, Kabīr got free.

Although Tukārām, as we have seen, does occasionally openly criticize the futility of insincere religious practices, he also accepts at least some "external" practices provided they are performed with devotion. Above all he insists on the obligation to make biannual or monthly pilgrimages to Paṇḍharpur and worship the stone image in the Temple of Viṭṭhal-Kṛṣṇa. Kabīr has nothing but scorn for any form of external practice or idolatry. In another song from the *Bījak*, he says[27]:

I've seen the pious Hindus, rule-followers,
early morning bath-takers—
killing souls, they worship rocks.
. . . .
And posturing yogis, hypocrites,
hearts crammed with pride,
praying to brass, to stones, reeling
with pride in their pilgrimage,
fixing their caps and their prayer-beads,
painting their brow-marks and arm-marks,
braying their hymns and their couplets,
reeling. They never heard of soul.

Kabīr reserves his choicest taunts for the Brahmins who perform animal sacrifices[28]:

Saints, the Brahmin is a slicked-down butcher.
He slaughters a goat and rushes for a buffalo
without a twinge of pain in his heart.

. . . .

How holy! What a superior race! What authority
in society, and how people grovel
to get his initiation!

. . . .

Kabir says, saints, this is the Kaliyug:
the age of phony Brahmins.

His views about the supposed foundations of the caste system are equally caustic. By one traditional view the second birth of the sacred thread ceremony, which is reserved for men alone, bestows Brahmin status. Kabīr remarks[29]:

If putting on the thread makes you a Brahmin,
what does the wife put on?
That Shudra's touching your food, pandit!
How can you eat it?

In another view, the pollution of untouchability comes through the karma of past lives and is innate from birth. Kabīr, who daily suffered the stigma of being both heretic and Untouchable, can only see untouchability as a baseless but cruel joke[30]:

Paṇḍit, look in your heart for knowledge.
Tell me where untouchability
came from, since you believe in it.
Mix blood, semen and air—
a body bakes in a body.
As soon as the eight lotuses
are ready, it comes
into the world. Then what's
untouchable?

The life of Kabīr is the subject of a number of well-known legends. Unfortunately, as in the cases of Śaṅkara and Tukārām, none of the extant versions date from Kabīr's own time. Among the older accounts of his life can be mentioned Anant-dās' *Kabīr kī paracaī* (? *c.*1588)[31], Nābhādās' *Bhaktamāl* (*c.*1600) with its commentary by Priyā-dās (1712), the Persian *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib* ascribed to Muḥsin Fānī (? *c.*1650), an unpublished verse text by Garīb-dās (1717-1778), an account in Mahipati's *Bhakta-vijay* (1762), and one in Ragho-dās' *Bhaktamāl*. None of these texts, with the partial exception of Garīb-dās, is directly associated with the Kabīr Panth. Probably the oldest Kabīr Panth hagiography extant is *Kabīr-i-Manshūr* written in Urdu by Paramānand-dās in 1887. More modern Kabīr Panth hagiographies include the *Kabīr-*

kasauṭī (1942), Brahmalīnamuni's Sanskrit *Sadgurusśrī Kavīracaritam* (1960), and Gaṅgāśaraṇ Śāstrī's *Kabīr jīvanacharitra* (1976). The first two of these texts come from the Dharma-dās branch of the panth and the last from the Kabīr Chaurā branch. The *Kabīr-i-Manshūr* is also a Dharma-dāsī text.

Three legendary episodes of his life are found in almost all these texts, including the earlier ones not associated directly with the Kabīr Panth: 1)his becoming a disciple of the Brahmin teacher Rāmānand in spite of his Muslim and Untouchable background, 2)his conflict with Brahmins and *qāzīs* which lead to his being subjected to various ordeals by the Muslim ruler Sikandar, 3)his choosing to die at a place called Magahar instead of his more auspicious home town Banaras. The latter two episodes also seem to be alluded to in some of Kabīr's songs. A number of the texts, though mostly the later ones, also contain different versions of his being adopted as a newly born, or "appeared", child by a Muslim couple.[32] Mahipati's Marathi *Bhakta-vijay* and the Sikh sources contain episodes about Kabīr's wife, or wives, and his son Kamāl. There seems to be some corroboration of these episodes in the songs of Kabīr found in the *Ādi Granth*. The sadhus of the Kabīr Panth insist that Kabīr was a *vairāgī* who never married.

From the point of view of the social ideology of non-caste Hinduism, the episodes of Kabīr's taking Rāmānand as a guru and Kabīr's conflict with the Brahmins, *qāzīs* and King Sikandar are particularly interesting. For the sake of simplicity I will limit my discussion to these two episodes, using the Kabīr Panth version in Paramānand-dās' *Kabīr-i-Manshūr*.[33]

Kabīr was born, or at least raised, in a Muslim weaver (*julāhā*) family.[34] That he should seek initiation from a Brahmin guru such as Rāmānand was an act of utmost temerity, for Kabīr was both a non-Hindu and an Untouchable. For this and other reasons many scholars have doubted the historical truth of this relation, but this question need not be broached in the present context. According to the *Kabīr Manśūr* (pp. 107-108), already before meeting Rāmānand the young Kabīr showed an inclination to worship the Hindu god Rām. One day he put on the Vaiṣṇava forehead mark and a sacred thread. The Brahmins saw this and reproved him for attempting to adopt their religion. Kabīr replies (p. 108):

> We weave thread (*sūt*) on the loom, why have you made the sacred thread (*janeū*) yours [alone]? And we make Govind Rām dwell in our hearts, what

about yours? You recite the *Gītā*, and constantly go running to the door of rich persons for the sake of getting worldly gain.

Kabīr's reply won him the respect of some *sants*, but they insisted that his religious talent was wasted without a guru. Kabīr went to Rāmānand and made his request but the guru replied (p. 108): "'I do not initiate Śūdras.'" Kabīr then found out the hour of the early morning dark when Rāmānand went for his morning bath in the Ganges and lay down in his path. When the guru's wooden shoes hit him in the head, Kabīr began to cry. Rāmānand put his hands on Kabīr's head and said (p. 109): "'Don't cry, my child. Say "Rām, Rām."'" Kabīr took this to be his initiatory *mantra*. The next day Kabīr put on the full Vaiṣṇava regalia and began to chant the name of Rām. When people asked how he had become a Vaiṣṇava, he told them that Rāmānand had given him initiation. Many *sannyāsīs* and *bairāgīs* then went to Rāmānand to ask why he had perpetrated this violation of custom. Rāmānand replied that he had never initiated any Julāhā. Kabīr was fetched to justify his claim. Kabīr reminded the angry Rāmānand of what had happened on the steps to the Ganges. Kabīr's wise arguments, with the help of a minor miracle, eventually convinced Rāmānand to accept the young Julāhā as a disciple and the other disciples of Rāmānand accepted him as an equal.

In this episode a much more accomodating attitude toward Brahmanic orthodoxy is evident than in the songs of Kabīr himself. This corresponds to a strong tendency towards Sanskritization, the emulative movement towards a Brahmanic model, evident in most of the written works of the Kabīr Panth and in the behaviour and ideas of many contemporary sadhus. Nonetheless the episode clearly reveals the socio-religious conflict between caste and non-caste Hinduism and shows Kabīr to be much more willing to challenge Brahmanic orthodoxy than a more modest reformer such as Tukārām.

The second episode I want to discuss shows the hostility between Kabīr and the representatives of socio-religious orthodoxy, both Muslim and Hindu, still more clearly. As Kabīr's fame grew, the hostility to his ideas is said to have grown apace among both the Brahmins outside of Rāmānand's camp and among the Muslim *qāzīs* and mullahs.[35] When Sikandar Lodhī came to Banaras, he was suffering from a severe fever. Kabīr's enemies suggested that Kabīr would be able to cure him. Their real aim was to have an opportunity to make accusations against Kabīr. To their dismay,

when Kabīr was brought, Sikandar's fever instantly vanished. In spite of this, Kabīr's "dogmatic enemies among the *paṇḍits* and *qāzīs*" made their accusations (p. 113): "'Exalted presence! This Kabir is a heretic (*nāstik*). He acts against the religious laws of both Hindus and Muslims, and goes about crying "I am God (*khudā*), and I am the sole God (*prabhu*) of the entire world (*saṃsār*)." In this way he constantly babbles heretical words.'" When Sikandar asked if this accusation was true, Kabīr "fearlessly" replied (p. 113): "'I am God (*prabhu*), the Creator (*vidhāyak*) of the entire universe.'" Sikandar then called for a cow and had it killed in Kabīr's presence. "'If you are truly God,'" he said, "'then bring this cow back to life.'" Kabīr snapped his finger. The cow jumped up, and its udder became full with milk enough for all to drink.

Sikandar's teacher (*pīr*) Sheikh Taqī then grew envious of Kabīr. When he complained to Sikandar, the king said: "You are my wise teacher (*pīr-murśid*) and he is a *dardīlu* (?) dervish (*durveś*). You have said that teachers and fakirs are both forms of God. Then you and Kabīr are of the same form." The king's defense of Kabīr angered the Sheikh still more. He met with the Brahmins and mullahs who complained that Kabīr was attacking the faith of both the Hindus and Turks and had accused them of being butchers because they offered animal sacrifices. In addition, they complained, the people were beginning to pay more respect to Kabīr than to themselves. Sheikh Taqī told them his intention to have Kabīr (p. 115) "drowned in the river, burned in the fire, buried in a wall, cut up to make a curry, blown from the mouth of a cannon, shut up in a well, and trampled by a wild elephant." The Brahmins and mullahs were pleased with this idea and went to Sikandar to demand that Kabīr be subjected to these ordeals. Kabīr miraculously survived them all and Sikandar and Sheikh Taqī were forced to ask his forgiveness. Kabīr gave his pardon to Sikandar but told the Sheikh that he would reap the rewards of his evil actions.

Even after this, the hostility of the Brahmins continued. To discredit Kabīr, several Brahmins disguised themselves as ascetics and announced to people far and wide that Kabīr would give a great feast (*bhaṇḍārā*). When the unexpected multitudes arrived, Kabīr retired to the jungle to meditate. Meanwhile help arrived from heaven and all were fed. Paramānand-dās' text ends the episode with the saying, taken from the *Devī Bhāgavata* 6.11.42 (p. 121):

"Those who were demons (*rākṣasas*) in the Tretā and Dvāpara yugas, have taken the form of Brahmins in this Kali yuga."

The acute hostility towards both Brahminic and Muslim orthodoxy expressed by this episode hardly needs comment. The presence of versions of this episode in virtually all the oldest texts containing legends of Kabīr, and even in some of the songs attributed to him, suggests that the story may embody historical memories of a time when Kabīr and his followers may have attempted to create a religious movement independent of both Islam and Hinduism. However the case may be, the continued popularity of the episode reveals the considerable gulf which still separates the Hinduism of low caste religious movements such as the Kabīr Panth, not only from orthodox Brahmanic movements such as that of the *smārtas* who follow the teachings of Śaṅkara, but also from movements of popularization "from above" such as the Vārakarī-sampradāy of Tukārām.

NOTES

[1]*Ten Principal Upanishads with Śaṅkarabhāṣya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978). In Sanskrit. All the translations from Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Upaniṣads are made from this edition.

[2]*Bhagavad-gītā: With the Commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*, ed. Dinkar Vishnu Gokhale (2nd ed.; Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1950). In Sanskrit.

[3]Śaṅkara, *Brahmasūtra-Śaṅkarabhāṣya*, ed. with Hindi commentary by Hanumāndās (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 1964).

[4]See also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-bhāṣya* ii.4.6; *Upadeśasāhasrī* ii.1.23-24.

[5]See W.R. Antarkar, "Saṅkṣepa Śaṅkara Jaya of Mādhavācārya...," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, XLI (1972), 1-23, for a discussion of some of the technical details of these two texts. See also my "The Life of Śaṅkarācārya," in F.W. Clothey and J.B. Long (eds.), *Experiencing Siva* (Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books, 1983), pp. 155-75. The standard edition of Mādhava's text is that of the Ānandāśram Press (Poona: 1915). Recently a full English translation by Swami Tapasyananda, entitled *Śaṅkara-Dig-Vijaya*, has been published (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978).

[6]I have analyzed this symbolic dialogue in more detail in "The Life...".

[7]G.A. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā* (Poona: Deccan College, 1960), p. 222.

[8]This and the following songs of Tukārām were very kindly translated for me by Shankar Gopal Tulpule and Anne Feldhaus. This song corresponds to the Indu-prakāś edition, no. 320.

[9]Translated Shankar Gopal Tulpule and Anne Feldhaus. Indu-prakāś edition, no. 4392.

[10]Translated Shankar Gopal Tulpule and Anne Feldhaus. Indu-prakāś edition, no. 4299.

[11]Translated Shankar Gopal Tulpule and Anne Feldhaus. Indu-prakāś edition, no. 1210 (first verse and refrain omitted). The inclusion of pilgrimage among the useless exterior practices is curious in view of the fact that the Vārakarīs are pilgrims par excellence. Presumably he is not referring to a pilgrimage to Paṇḍharapur made with devotion.

[12]See E. Zelliot, "Chokamela and Eknath: Two Bhakti Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," in J. Lele (ed.), *Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), pp. 136-56.

[13]*Stories of Indian Saints* [*Bhaktavijay*], trans. by J.E. Abbott and N.R. Godbole, 2 vols. in 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982 [first published in 1933]); and *Life of Tukaram* [*Bhaktalīlāmṛt*], chaps. 25-40, trans. by J.E. Abbott (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980 [first published in 1930]).

[14]Mahipati, *Bhaktavijay*, chap. 52, trans. Abbott and Godbole, vol. II, pp. 289-93; Mahipati, *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, chap. 35, trans. Abbott, pp. 202-220; and Tukārām, translated by G.A. Deleury in *Psaumes du pèlerin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), p. 102 (no. 50. Indu-prakāś edition, no. 2493).

[15]Trans. Abbott, p. 203.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 210.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

[18]Vinayamohan Śarmā, *Hindī ko Marāṭhī saṃtoṃ kī den*. (Patna: Bihār-Rāṣṭrabhāṣā-Pariṣad, 1957), p.58.

[19]*Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, chap. 38, trans. Abbott, p. 261.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 262.

[21]*Ibid.*, pp. 262-63. Mukundarāj seems to be both a Nāth and an Advaitin.

[22]This argument, often used to justify the doubtful attribution of a number of devotional hymns to Śaṅkara, is well illustrated in the successively simpler teachings Śaṅkara impacts to his dying mother in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. See this text, chap. 14, vss. 29-55, and Lorenzen, "The Life...," p. 171.

[23]The relation of the thought of the Vārakarī-sampadāy *sants* to Advaita seems to be a subject which merits further investigation. B.P. Bahirat (*The Philosophy of Jñānadeva* [Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1961]) concludes (p. 73) that Jñāndev's cosmological view "strikes at the root of Mayavada or Avidyavada of Shamkar which regards the world as caused by Neisance and, therefore, illusory." Other authors such as Vinayamohan Śarmā (pp. 73, 76) assert that the Vārakarīs are essentially *advaita-vādins*. On the face of it Bahirat's view is more likely.

[24]*Bhaktavijay*, chap. 48, vss. 183-203; trans. Abbott and Godbole, pp. 215-17.

[25]"Traditional Intellectuals in Crisis: The Sadhus of the Kabir Panth," mimeo, 1984. See also my "The Kabir Panth: Heretics to Hindus" in my (ed.), *Religious Change and Cultural Domination* (Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico: 1981), pp. 151-71.

[26]*Bījak, ramainī* 33, in the imaginative *and* accurate translation of Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir* (San Fransisco: North Point Press, 1983), p. 84. The best text is Shukdev Singh (ed.) *Kabīr-bījak* (Allahabad: Nilabh Prakāśan, 1972).

[27]*Bījak, śabda* 4, trans. Hess and Singh, p. 42.

[28]*Bījak, śabda* 11, trans. Hess and Singh, pp. 46-47.

[29]*Bījak, śabda* 84, trans. Hess and Singh, p. 69-70.

[30]*Bījak, śabda* 41, trans. Hess and Singh, p. 55. Translation slighly altered

[31]This text has still to be published. Manuscripts of it are found in the library of the Nāgarī-pracāriṇī-sābhā in Banaras and the India Office Library in London. Its contents are partly summarized in Trilokī Nārāyan Dīkṣit, *Paricayī Sāhitya* (Lucknow: Viśvavidayālay Hiṃdī-Prakaśan, 1959), pp. 42-45, 103-111. A useful short survey of the other older texts containing these legends is found in Ch. Vaudeville, *Kabīr*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), chapter 2.

[32]I have discussed some versions of this episode as an example of Sanskritization in "Kabīr Panth: Heretics to Hindus."

[33]The original Urdu text is virtually unobtainable, but the text is readily available, and widely read among followers of the panth, in its Hindi translation by Sudhā-dās, entitled *Kabīr Mansūr* (Baroda: Paṇḍit Śrī Motīdāsajī Chetanadāsajī, 1956). I will base the discussion on this translation.

[34]P.D. Barthwal (*Traditions of Indian Mysticism* [Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978]), H.P. Dvivedī (*Kabīr* [Delhi: Rājakamal Prakāśan, 1971]), and other scholars have speculated that Kabīr's family may also have had some historical connection with the religious traditions of the Nāths. In any case, it is generally agreed that his parents were practising Muslims.

[35]Paramānand-dās, pp. 112-121. Sikandar Lodhī's visit to Banaras is here dated V.S. 1545 (=1488 A.D.). Like the meeting with Rāmānand, the Sikandar episode is historically suspect.

Jñāneśvar and Tukārām: An Exercise in Critical Hermaneutics*

by JAYANT LELE

For some time now I have argued that the message of Vārkarī *sants* was potentially revolutionary (*cf*. Lele 1978 and 1981). By this I mean, primarily, the following:

a) *sants* offered a comprehensive and immanent critique of contemporary social order.

b) they offered an all-encompassing blue-print for transcending and containing (*aufhebung*) the essential core of a tradition within which their contemporary social order was embedded.

c) there existed sufficient evidence to suspect that the entrenched and priviledged sections of the society felt threatened by the rising appeal of the Vārkarī message especially by its popularity among the producing classes. The latter had experienced heightened levels of oppression during the recurring periods of economic crisis which had just preceded or were co-terminous with the Jñāneśvar and Tukārām periods.

d) to appreciate and understand the subsequent conservative (as opposed to revolutionary) direction taken by the Vārkarī *saṃpradāya* one must look at the social history of its "political" or hegemonic appropriation. The rise of Śivājī marks the end of the third and the last creative period of the *sant* tradition. After Śivājī, although the *saṃpradāya* survived, it produced no great *sants*.

In this paper I hope to briefly explain some of the reasons behind the first two of these claims.

Sant Literature as a Critique

The concept of critique needs elaboration. Apart from the usual notions of text elucidation (*ṭīkā*) and text interpretation (*bhāṣya*) that are associated with the word, I wish to explore one other dimension. Critique also implies a dynamic re-appropriation of traditional meanings of texts and of the tradition within which they are embedded. This is the dimension of critique that is sensitive to the movement of natural-social life and natural-social meanings through history. When I speak of restoration of meanings or of discovering the essential or "utopian" core of tradition, I am not alluding to some transcendental deep structures that reveal eternally valid meanings once and for all time. I am speaking of an exercise of making new sense without losing the sense that is historically embedded in a tradition of the people, i.e., the sense that has retained its contenuity through the continuity of the community to which it belongs. The problem arises when this continuity is understood in a linear way, as having developed without tensions or upheavals or without conflicts and contradictions. By locating the sense-making of tradition in history we can render it dynamic in the sense in which history is dynamic. Tradition thus ceases to be a dead weight against which "modernity" is called upon to wage its battles seeking its collective annihilation. Instead modernity itself comes to be understood as "creative release" of the essential core of tradition into its new contexts. Thus tradition is regenerated as a "new sense" with new meanings.

This dimension of the concept of critique makes the writings of Jñāneśvar and Tukārām particularly relevant for our explorations. They were able to release the modernity of their tradition, for their times, through a penetrating critique of interpretations that had come to encrust its essential core. Through a similar critique of their writings we may also be able to regain the essential core of that tradition for our times. Understood in this way, the close link between crisis and critique should become obvious. Critique, in this sense, can not be a leisure time activity of the "unattached" intellectuals ("only their tongues are supple with learning" *jive sakaḷa śāstrā cā sarāvo—Jñā* 15:396). It is a courageous

commitment to truth and to the enlightenment of a society in which the darkness of ignorance (*ajñānāce āṃdhāre*) has come to rule, and in which the lamp of reason (*viveka dīpa*) has lost all its lustre (*avivekācī kājaḷī*). When an all-encompassing social order, that contains and fulfils the needs and desires of all, enters a state of crisis, because it will no more fulfill that claim, man's divinity (*āpunyāce ni kevāre—Jñā 4:51*)," must manifest itself through those who have been denied the joy of authentic life (*sukha*). The aim of the critique, theoretical and practical at the same time, is to restore the unity of truth, justice, joy (*dharmāsīm nītījñīṃ. śeṃsa bharīṃ—Jñā* 4:53) and to liberate humanity that has caught itself in such a state of crisis and seeks to overcome it. More specifically, it arises out of consciousness of a discrepancy, experienced in everyday life, between what is and what could and, therefore, ought to be. It also sees crisis as a discrepancy between what is and what it is claimed to be by those who are placed "in charge" of making sense of and implementing social order with or without the consent of the governed.

In order to gain this sense of crisis and of critique in Jñāneśvar let us look at how he departs from the *Bhagvadgītā* while interpreting it. In Sanskrit, divinity claims to incarnate itself in order to protect the virtuous (*sādhū*). In Jñāneśvar's Marathi version those demanding truth, justice and virtue (*sajjana*) must themselves carry the responsibility to raise the flag of true joy. They become the embodiments of God (*sajjanāṃ karavī guḍī. survācī ubhavī—Jñā 4:52*). Tukārām is even more explicit. For him, in the age of crisis (*kāliyuga*), the upholders of man's divinity (*viṣṇudāva*) have a double task[1]:

> We, the servants of God, are softer than wax,
> Yet we are harder than the thunderbolt
> When pleased, we would give away the cloth on our arse,
> But we would lodge a stick on the head of a rogue;
> We may be more affectionate than parents,
> But can sabotage more than enemies do;
> When compared with us,
> What is nectar's sweetness or poison's bitterness?
>
> Tukā says, we are all sweet,
> We satisfy everybody's craving as is demanded of us

(*Ag*: 987)

There is overwhelming emphasis in the poetry of sants on conciousness (*citta*) and on its all-encompassing powers to

transcend and contain divergent interests of the community (*citta śuddha tarī śabhu mitra hotī* says Tukārām). It makes new sense as the mediating relationship between crisis and critique. Meanings that have been alienated from one's daily existence and are thus transported to a heavan beyond human reach demand concious reappropriation. That involves unmasking of myths that have dulled one's discerning reason (*viveka*). It took courage and rational consciousness to reveal the inner desires of those mythical immortals who, supposedly, occupied heaven. As a reward for obeying the ritualistic, unmediated demands of an oppressive social order, orthodoxy promises heaven after death to the common believer. When confronted with an ideal community on earth, a community of *sants*, even those immortals will want to renounce their immortality and will beg for a life among ordinary mortals. Those who have already found a place in God's own abode must wait forever and in vain in the hope that pure and virtuous *sants* will want to join them. The latter, conscious of their unique relation to divinity, joyously sing its praises and play with it as equals. They have no time or urge for heaven (Tukārām, *Ag*:4367). This unique relation to divinity and its consciousness is dear to *sants*. Without such consciousness life is tasteless, says Tukārām. It is like a calf deprived of sustenance, being kicked away by its mother. It is the food without salt. The presence of conciousness, on the other hand, generates a love breeze of human divinity that encompasses all social life in joy(*Ag*:136). For sants this is not a matter of isolated inner self-reflexion based on renunciation of the community. Only in shared, social consciousness can one enjoy the taste of community (*saṃga rucikara Ag*:4102). Jñāneśvar speaks of the equanimity (*samatva*) of that consciousness (*Jñā*: 2:273) and describes it thus:

> Oh, Arjuna, therefore, recognize the universe that is within you and thy unity with it.
> Cultivate that unity, that equanimity, for there is nothing more to be gained beyond the consciousness of that unity.
>
> (*Jñā*: 6:408, 409)

One without this consciousness, without a sense for his embeddedness in the universality of human social community is contrasted thus:

Glorifies himself with the fragrence of hollow words
Deceives, misleads those who worship him
Recognize him as nothing but a mine of ignorance
Like a forest on fire
He becomes a source of misery for the whole world
By his mere existence.

(*Jñā*: 13:661, 662)

These selective illustrations are intended to introduce the unique sense of crisis out of which *sants* develop their critique. Its appeal is to consciousness, to a sense for universality. They speak for a community that is under a threat of disintegration because it exists only counterfactually. Its disintegration is predicated on the experience of a blatant denial of those claims in the everyday experience of its members.

Sants reserve their severest and most incisive weapons for an attack on hypocrisy, ego-focality and the mindless pursuit of perverted self-interest. This is not an accident, not a poetic license. Ideologies and ideologues, demagogues who glibly defend oppression, always claim it as necessary, as being in the best interest of the community, in the last instance. A critique of falsehood and hypocrisy, of fraudulent propagation and mindless acceptance of a ritualised social order must, inevitably, become a critique of ideology, of legitimation that has lost its basis in reality. It can come into its own and become the blue-print of the community not by demands for total annihilation of a social order but by its efforts for its authentic restoration. It must invite and examine the original claims of legitimacy and call for a new social order that will be capable of fulfilling them.

Understood in this way, critique implies immanence. It demands that legitimacy claims be understood and redeemed on their own terms. They should not be subjected to alien criteria or judgements, however seductively potent the latter may appear as weapons of critique. For a critique of oppression that imposes standards external to a community soon deteriorates into a dogma and is an easy source of arrogant imposition of particular interests decked out as universal or universally valid. There is also the opposite danger from an externally guided critique. It can become quarantined as permissible counterculture, such that it cannot have any significant impact on the illegitimacy of a dominant social order. Indian tradition is full of examples of these hostile (*viparīta*) but

permissible countercultures. The reaction of Vārkarī *sants* to the Mahānubhāvs has to be understood from this perspective.

The potency of an immanent critique of oppression lies in its commitment to exploding the myth of legitimacy by unveiling the truth that lies behind the myth. Unless we are to assume an inherent mindlessness of the masses and, as a corollary, the genetic intellectual superiority of the conspiring oppressors, we must at least logically perceive the possibility that the potency of a myth lies in its hidden truth. Hence a critique is really an appeal to the authenticity of a myth. Demystification can only destroy the crust of falsehood. *Sants* looked upon myth and ritual not as a conspiracy against the irrational masses but as their reason, as eros denied but as eros nevertheless. Vārkarī practice, for example, exposed the falsehood of brahmanic purity. It stood courageously against brahmanic arrogance by simply showing that purity of Vārkarī thought and practice could far exceed any such claims on behalf of mindless ritualism and brahmin-mediated worship. We thus witness the strange spectacle of a self-conscious, self-proclaimed *śudra* Vārkarī standing taller in his purity and simplicity. A mirror to the hypocrisy and elaborate self-indulgence of the brahmins, how can we mistake this to be cowardly obeisance to orthodoxy? Contemporary stalwarts of that orthodoxy most certainly did not indulge in such modernist delusions. They responded with anger and vengence, and they hit hard.

Jñāneśvar's choice of *dharmadhenū* (a cow dedicated to God) to describe those whose arrogance is matched by their ego-focality (*kāma*), sanctimoniousness (*daṃma*) and self-intoxication (*mada*) is not accidental (*Jñā*: 16:329). In his critique of the basic elements of brahmanic life-world (*brahmakarma*), as described in *Bhagvadgītā*, Jñāneśvar offers us an original and elaborate description of the nine essential virtues of a brahmin. The state of calm(*śamu*) is a virtue which comes only from humility. With it a brahmin's intellect should meet the spirit, as a mistress meets her lover in the eager tranquility of a dark night. The other eight virtues of self-control (*dama*), austerity (*tapas*), purity (*śauca*), peaceful courage in deprivation (*śāṃti*), forgiveness (*kṣamā*), rectitude (*ārjava*), knowledge gained from creative interpretation of the scriptures (*jñāna*) as well as experiential knowledge (*vijñāna*), and finally, a respectful but reasoned acceptance of authority in trust (*āstīkya*), are described with metaphors that penetrate one's understanding by bringing to life the everyday experiences of a

common man. This is a mirror. It reflects the ideal community, of intellectually guided, selfless and socially conscious leadership. When held in front of the contemporary practice of brahmanism it must have evoked terror. Any further comments would simply destroy the critical impact of this edifice. As usual Tukārām is more explicit:

> Fortune tellers, forecasters, predictors of good omens, they bore us.
> Even their sight is distasteful.
> They who worship the twin goddesses of prosperity and power,
> and others who claim magic powers for their speech.
> They destroy all accumulated merit and pursue the path of disgrace.
>
> (*Ag*: 1501)

For us, to be able to regain a sense for the powerful impact of this critique of brahmanism, of the discrepancy between its theory and practice, we must attempt to reenter the ethos of discourse (*kathā* and *pravacana*). Both Jñāneśvar and Tukārām met and interacted with their audiences as equals. They asked for their gentle and kind attention. We are to be part of that discourse by both the form and the substance of their poetry. Those living and lively deliberations between sensitive men and women regardless of their caste and social status invite and urge us to participate across centuries. The "poetic merit" of that discourse makes only a truncated sense without a willingness to participate. With our "modernist" hindsight we create barriers and deny ourselves access to the immanent critique of tradition within the tradition of critique exemplified by the *sants*. Not only do we insist on misunderstanding them but we also misunderstand ourselves. These distortions of the message of the *sants* and of the Vārkarī *saṃpradāya* come from two directions. We meet those who deify *sants* as upholders of orthodoxy as well as those who denounce them, on the same basis, for lack of courage. The former, having staged a complete takeover of the institutional nexus of the *saṃpradāya*, speak from a vested interest in isolating, distorting and appropriating the message of sants as a quietistic plea for compliance by the "inherently dim-witted" masses: by women and *śudras*. They quote *sants* in support of this claim and have fossilised the Vārkarī practice at its centuries old conventions. They elaborate on *sant* poetry routinely and literally for they have no desire or ability for critical-hermenutic re-entry into the ethos of Vārkarī discourse at either a theoretical or practical level. The Modernists also understand and use *sant* poets mechanistically

to denounce tradition in its entirety. Like the orthodox interpreters, the modernists are also products of the same era. They have lost the will and the sensitivity to develop an authentic critique of the *sants*. In their superficial reading of both poetry and history, *sants* show no obvious signs of rebellion. Hence, they are dismissed as irrelevant to modernization. What it really means is that they cannot be used instrumentally to arouse the passions of the masses in support of externally sponsored causes. At the same time the modernists desperately try to make a common cause with those whom they define as ignorant and illiterate peasants. The latter are frequently urged to give up their life and faith for alien revolts to be stage-managed from above.

Sants are thus accused of upholding orthodoxy (*sanātanadharma*) because they refuse to openly and totally denounce Hindu social order (*varṇāśramadharma*). They are accused of holding the same prejudices against *śudras* and women as do orthodox brahmans. In spite of the vibrant and equal presence of women and *śudra sants* in the community of sants, both the upholders and the enemies of orthodoxy like to dismiss the possible claim that *sants*, through their thoughts and activity, produced a comprehensive, immanent critique of brahmin orthodoxy. *Sants* have said, so goes the refrain, that all are equal before god and only before god. Since *jāti* and *varṇa* order persisted during the ascendence of sants and after, it is used as a living proof of the absence of a revolutionary spirit in their writings and actions. The quietistic, conservative behaviour of today's Vārkarīs helps reinforce this overwhelming prejudice. The purveyors of this judgement still claim to be enthralled by the "poetic merit" of sant literature while orthodoxy uses this "merit" to "educate" the illiterate masses.

Jñāneśvar and Tukārām become, in their hands, spokesmen for pain and repression as just desserts derived from past, sinful life. The foes of orthodoxy, still deeply touched by the tranquillity of Jñāneśvar's poetry or the spiritedness and raw vigour of Tukārām's emotional outbursts fail to ask the pertinent question. Is such authenticity of expression thinkable, in the domain of faith or devotion without a total commitment to authentic and truthful existence in all domains of life? Modernists do not know what unfractured world-views are and cannot, therefore, wholeheartedly enter them.

To regain access we must recognize the finitude of our hindsight. We must enter the life world of *sants* with humility. *Sants* can gently guide us in that direction because they are the epitome of humility. To judge humility as weakness is an act of cowardice. Like Jñāneśvar and Tukārām we must approach tradition with humility and love of a child for his mother, with the trust of a student for his teacher. Our recently cultivated arrogance, our colonial legacy, stands in our way. Whether one thinks of oneself as a child or a student one enters into a relationship of inequality whose telos is in overcoming itself. It looks upon equality not as a conquest but as the eros of union in a newly created intersubjectivity. Tradition, to *sants*, is a lived way of life, a way of making sense and new sense. That new sense must arise out of tradition and must still remain embedded in it. *Sants* and their followers in their own times would have had no sense for the artificial separation of the message of poetry from its "formal" merits. Such a separation of form from the totality of life context is possible only under the conditions of today's alienated life-context. This is the legacy of our colonial and post colonial "intellectual" life.

The World-View of Sants

To enter the life world of sants with critical humility is to ask the question: what are the foundations of authenticity of their aesthetic expression and experience? Those who wish to dismiss *sants* as irrelevant for our times can, of course, cite many examples of their adherence to the *varṇa-jāti* constituted social order. However, what is missed in this attack on them is the recognition of the fact that *sants* make a different and yet fully embedded sense of that social order. Opponents claim, for example, that since *Bhagvadgītā* upholds the fourfold division of society, Jñāneśvar's choice of that text is already indicative of his adherence to orthodoxy. Jñāneśvar has this to say:

> Then Hara said to his consort.
> My beloved,
> like thy beautiful disposition
> is the eternal newness of
> the meaning of the *Gītā*.
>
> (*Jñā*: 1:71)

Jñāneśvarī, for its author, is an exercise in critical reappropriation of tradition that is encompassed, synthetically, in *Bhagavadgītā*. His meanings thus derived are new not only for his own times but can and should be eternally new. Whether we have lost the capability for such a renewal is the real question.

Both Jñāneśvar and Tukārām demand of themselves, and of their audience, a sense of trust and humility, the art of listening, that rests on gentleness (*haḷuvārapaṇa*) and alertness (*avadhāna*) of mind. They are thus able to reclaim the essential core of tradition, not *Gītā* itself but *gītatatva*. That core consists of the centrality of the species—being man (*puruṣa*). His simultaneous and indivisible unity in nature, as socially distinguished "body-mind" nature, is never lost sight of. It is captured in its totality in terms of the two quasi-transcendental, indivisible interests (*puruṣārtha*) of survival (*artha* and *kāma*) mediated through social order (*dharma*) which, in itself, constitutes his third interest. The so-called fourth interest in liberation (*mokṣa*) has a special meaning for *sants*. It exists for them in the denial of its seperateness. They appeal to it only to grasp the essential core of the other three interests and to give them a contemporary meaning. That new system of meaning is presented in stark contrast to the current epistemological posture of the ruling brahmin orthodoxy. Both in theory and in practice the Vārkarī blueprint for a new and renewed society aimed at revolutionising orthodoxy without seeking to destroy tradition. For brahmin orthodoxy liberation (*mokṣa*) was and still remains an "other-worldly" enterprise. It is like waiting subserviently for the day of judgement. Jñāneśvar's *vārkarīs* asked such other-worldly liberation, when offered, to step aside (*kaivalyāte paraute sara mhaṇatī*). For their devotion (*bhaktī*) to the divinity on earth is overwhelming. Their daily life as divine play (*līḷā*) has come to constitute the moral identity of that community of *sants* (*nīti*) (*Jñā*: 9:192). Tukārām's response to that otherworldly, distant divinity is also to say that he has no interest in such liberation. More difficult and more distant it is, so much the better (*mokṣa tumcā devā...tumhī durlabha to ṭhevā—Ag*: 714). In his community of *sants* heaven has already descended to earth (*kelī vaikumṭha medinī—Ag* : 1077). In this heaven, lifeless, objectivistic dictates of nameless scriptures are mediated if not substituted by the interpretive power of *sants*. So, says Jñāneśvar:

> **Even though Vedas have said a great deal and have offered many paths, one must choose only that which ensures one's wellbeing.**
>
> (*Jñā*: 2:260)

Sants, as the knowing, conscious beings (*jñānī*) must regain from tradition (*vedārthātem vicāriti*) that which is dictated by their unbifurcated reason (*mag apekṣīta svīkarīti sasāra jem—Jñā*: 2:263). Tukārām also asserts, on behalf of *sants*:

> **We alone know the meaning of the Vedas.**
> **Others carry them as dead weight.**
> **The taste of food can be known only by those who have eaten,**
> **not by those who merely watch.**
> **Those who have not implemented these meanings in life**
> **merely spoil them.**
> **They are like coolies who carry other people's baggage.**
>
> (*Ag*. 2266)

This self confidence with respect to tradition gives *sants* the courage and strength to challenge and denounce the false purveyors of otherworldly liberation (*mokṣa*). They expose the myth of a heavan that can be attained only through ritualised and fatalistic obsequiousness.

In this way, *sants* have produced a blueprint for a heaven on earth. Their key to that heaven is the humanised divinity that each one of us can attain through authentic life practice. Orthodox brahmins also spoke of purity (*śuddhī*) and truthfulness (*sātvikatā*). *Sants* called this into question by showing, through the simplicity of their existence and the sanctity of their thought, the essential meaning of liberation as liberation on earth. It requires no rituals, no pilgrimages, no magic, and no penance. It merely asks you to cultivate the art of being oneself. In the community of *sants* the unbifurcated reason of man unites his material bodily existence and his local sense with the ongoing stream of tradition. Out of that tradition all local sense arises and to that tradition it eventually returns. The knowing ones (*jñānī*) live out their local rationality but also transcend it (*te prapaṃcūnī sāhajeṃ sāṃḍaleṃ—Jñā*: 2:131). It is thus that they grasp the meaning of their existence (*mag tatvatā tattva urale*). They receive knowledge as divine blessing (*prasāda*) for it is not theirs to create or destroy individualistically. But they must still receive it and make it their own. Not mindless rituals but conscious appropriation is demanded. Such knowledge gained and practiced will set the entire social order on fire, out of which it will

recreate itself as a new, all-containing, all-sustaining mode of existence. Vārkarī rejection of counter-cultural existence (*piśācya vṛttī*) and of parrallel, dependent culture of renunciation (*śramaṇa vṛttī*) gave their blueprint a unique potency. They rejected esoteric interpretations of divinity as well as its denial. They humanised it by making it intervene on behalf of true authenticity and justice, in human form. They made it into a child, into a mother, a teacher, a lover or a fellow worker. They played with it as they pleased. For them it transcended all caste barriers and all social conventions. It became their joy, their bliss, their eros. The whole world was thus lifted out of the notion that it was the den of misery and transformed into a playful eros of divine consciousness (*cidvilāsa*). To grasp that divine consciousness an oppressive daily practice needed to be transformed into a truly contained social productive activity. Man's past deeds of history, alienated from his consciousness by orthodoxy and thus appearing as forces beyond his control (*māyā, prarabdha, saṃcita*) had to be regained and transformed into his instrument of liberation. Through his virtues of openness, humility and trust, man was to produce new meanings out of old. Thus, says Tukārām,

> The absolute reality and its localised appearance
> are but the same.
> They are like body and its shadow.
> Try to get rid of it and it will refuse to go.
> Approach it with humility and it will disappear.
>
> (*Ag*: 65)

These sketchy glimpses into the potential community of *sants*, where gods and men lived and talked as equals, should alert us to the threat posed to a social order that had come to rest on hegemonically appropriated meanings of tradition. In Jñāneśvar's time, orthodox brahmins had produced over two thousand rituals. If the gullible seekers of otherworldly liberation were to spend all 365 days of a year, doing five or six of these rituals a day, they would have still run out of time (Gaḍgīḷ 1979, 283). It was these brahmins who, even when forced by Jñāneśvar's life practice to accord him a divine status would not, still, accept him as a fellow brahmin. By Tukārām's days, they had deteriorated even further. He has no reservations in calling them thieves and rogues (*dvija cahāḍa jāle cor—Ag*: 267 and *karitī taskarāī vipra—Ag*: 3035). Their greed had led Jñāneśvar to describe them as "frogs that desire

flies even when they are already half-way down the throat of a snake" (*Jñā* 9:509). Tukārām thought of them as donkeys, as beasts of burden, who carried the dead-weight of erudition (*Ag*: 1127). Their anger against brahmins was truly strong because they were no more real brahmins. Nor were the kings and feudal lords real leaders any more. That social order which had once moved the society forward, to a higher level of an all-containing existence, had now become hollow. It had come to rest on fraud, ostentation, injustice and ego-focality. The potential community of sants was aimed at transcending that perversion, that contradiction between reality and legitimacy.

Conclusion

In spite of scanty historical evidence it seems clear that the social order on which Jñāneśvar and Tukārām reflected was in an objective state of crisis. Jñāneśvar's glorification of the Yādav king, who had tortured his cousin to gain the throne and who weakly presided over the dissolution of a once containing social order, seems more ironical than real. It takes little imagination to smile at it with recognition, along with the knowing audiences with whom Jñāneśvar must have said it during his lively discourses. The degradation of social life following the splintering of the Bahamanī kingdom is somewhat better documented. The crisis thus produced, along with mounting oppression of the masses, reached its climax during the famine of 1630. That became a turning point in the life of Tukārām. He saw himself changing from a caring holder and dispenser of his community's surplus and savings into a ruthless money lender (Lad 1957).

Tukārām was the last of the great poet-saints of Vārkarī tradition. The famine of 1630 also produced a political movement that took over the Vārkarī impulse and re-interpreted it to re-establish the once challenged feudal order. It did so with only a modicum of caring that arose and disappeared with Śivājī (Lele 1981).

A rational reconstruction of history may recveal that the growth of Hindu militancy at the political level—of which Śivājī (as the spokesman of the feudatories) and Rāmdās (as the theorist of newly organised brahminism) became the main carriers—was able to incorporate the critical impulses of Vārkarī saints and to divert the energies of the people to defending the new state from northern

invasions. Through his own invasions into rich neighbouring territories and with new forms of social mobilization, Śivājī also restored a semblence of well-being in a once famine-ravaged region. Hindu intellectuals have invariably interpreted the Islamic presence as religious fanaticism. The egalitarian, non-ritualistic simplicity of the message of Islam may have posed at least as great a threat to the mindlessly ritualised, and idiosyncratically localised religious practice of medieval Hinduism. The benevolent Bahamanī (Muslim) regime (1347-1527) ended only when local feudatories broke its back in order to restore their own free-wheeling competition for a greater share in the surplus. Later Śivājī was able only to temporarily control competition. He also re-ordered much of its structure. In that process he may have weakened the original basis of Vārkarī appeal. He certainly paved the way for the subsequent rise of brahmin *peśvās*. In the end, the ascendence of the English put the final seal on the confinement of the Vārkarī movement to its contemporary inactivity.

NOTES

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[1]This translation of Tukārām's stanza 987 is from Nemade 1980. All other translations of Jñāneśvar and Tukārām are by the author. All references to Tukārām (*Ag*) are to *Śrī Tukārāmbāvāṃcyā Abhaṅgāṃcī Gāthā* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1955). All references to Jñāneśvar (*Jñā*) are to *Śrīguru Sakhāre Mahārāj Saṃpradāyik Sārth Jñāneśvarī* (Ālaṇḍī: Puṇe Kisan Mahārāj Sakhāre, 1972)

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Four Radical Saints in Maharashtra

by ELEANOR ZELLIOT

Over the centuries, there have been a number of religious figures in the Marathi-speaking area of India who have broken most social rules, denied the concept of pollution, behaved in very unorthodox fashion, preached strange and wondrous messages, and have still been honoured as holy men. There may be dozens of these men and women, but we have enough material about four of them to speculate a little on the nature of the radical saint of Maharashtra. Looking at the biography of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ of the 13th century, the poems of Cokhāmeḷā in the 14th, the work of Eknāth in the 16th and, more important for this paper, the legends about him, and the transcribed recording of a *kīrtan* of Gāḍge Mahārāj in the 20th century suggests answers to several questions: Is there some common thread in the message of these saints? How are they legitimized as respectable holy men when their message and/or their lives are unorthodox? Can the traditions from which these men came be linked? Looking at the history of the period during and after which these saints lived enables us to answer, much less satisfactorily, this question: What is the effect of the radical tradition?

Guṇḍam Rāüḷ

The life of the mad God Guṇḍam Rāüḷ in the 13th century has been recorded because he was seen as an incarnation of Parameśvara, the supreme Lord, by the heterodox Mahānubhāv sect. *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur*[1] makes it clear that he was considered God also by the Hindus of his time and place. As God,

of course, Guṇḍam Rāūḷ could behave in any way he pleased; his radiance, his miracles, his bringing rain in a time of drought, his giving life to the dead—all these encircled his madness and made it divine. Nevertheless, Guṇḍam Rāūḷ's actions were certainly different from those of most incarnations of the divine, his radical behaviour difficult for his followers to deal with. Three passages taken directly from Anne Feldhaus' translation of the 13th century text indicate the flavour of the Rāūḷ's eccentric behaviour. The first concerns the Rāūḷ's wandering from the Untouchables' quarters to the Brahmans':

47. The village headmen make an ordinance.

The village headmen said, "The Rāūḷ goes around among the houses of Māṅgs and Mahārs, and right afterwards he goes into the houses of consecrated Brāhmans . In this way, the Rāūḷ has caused general pollution. Put [the Māṅgs' and Mahārs'] houses outside the village. Then the Rāūḷ won't go to them."

Thus they had houses built outside the city. The original Mahār quarter was razed. But the Gosāvī would go to the new one, too, [saying], "Oh, I shouldn't go, I say .... I should go, I say .... No, I must not go, I tell you." In this way, he would amuse himself, going from house to house.

73. A Māṅg goes into a trance.

The Gosāvī was going along the Dābh Well road when he met a certain Māṅg. The man prostrated himself fully. And the Gosāvī, placing his holy foot on the man's back, moved on.

The man lay there for three days in a trance. Cows, water buffaloes, and calves walked over him. On the third day he got up.

Then he began to act like Iśvara.

The people said, "This Māṅg has polluted the entire village." So they tied him to a pipal tree in the wilderness.

At that time, a moneylender from Aḷajpur was on his way to Rāmṭek. A vision came to him in a dream, saying, "I am Rāma. I've been tied to a pipal tree in the wilderness."

So at daybreak the man went and found him tied there. He released him. He bought him a house and a field. He put two women there to take care of him.

His Rāmṭek pilgrimage was fulfilled right there. Later he went to see Rāma just for fun.

72. He takes care of a woman in confinement.

A certain woman was alone, all alone, with neither older nor younger people in her house. She gave birth to a child. There was no one to take care of her during her confinement. She wished, "The Rāüḷ is our Mother. The Rāüḷ is our Father. If the Rāüḷ comes, he'll take care of me now that I've had my baby."

At that time, the Gosāvī came along. He took care of her needs during her confinement. He served her meals. He bathed her. When her husband would sit [near her], the Gosāvī would hold the end of his garment between them and say, "Oh, drop dead! Get back, I tell you!" He would drive him away. "Oh, drop dead! She's given birth, I tell you." He would take her plate [of coals] and touch it to all the pots in the stack of storage pots. Then he would leave.

The Gosāvī did this for twelve days. Then he left.

***

At first glance, Guṇḍam Rāüḷ's actions in these three stories seem a mixture of compassion and the same kind of playfulness that led him to sit on the stone horse outside the village, to play with children, to tease women, to tell everyone right and left to "drop dead." Certainly the Rāüḷ never explains why he does something, nor does he tell others what to do. In a rare lucid passage (281), the Rāüḷ recites a verse to a Brahman from the South who has come in search of the incarnation of the supreme God:

I am not a man, nor a god or Yakṣa,
Nor a Brāhman, a Kṣatriya, a Vaiśya, or a Śūdra.
I am not a celibate; I am not a householder or a forest hermit,
Neither am I a mendicant, I who am innate knowledge.

After which he tells the Brahman in his inimitable fashion, "Drop dead."

It is clear that the Rāüḷ's divine status allows him complete freedom. When his freedom is challenged, the village protects him. In chapter 279, five hundred "renouncers" refuse to come into the village, saying, "The Rāüḷ is there. He is polluting everything. If he can be restrained, we'll come." Keśav Nāyak responds, "The Rāüḷ is powerful. The village belongs to the Rāüḷ. How can I have the Rāüḷ restrained? That's how things are." So the sannyasis come into the village, only to be told by the Rāüḷ, "Oh, drop dead! You're rolling stones! Rolling stones, I tell you."

It is tempting to make total sense out of the Rāuḷ's behaviour, but many instances concerning his touching his holy hand here, his holy foot there, his remarks after farting, make this very difficult. But there does seem to be a certain consistency regarding pollution. While the Rāuḷ is very strict about some forms of order, as when he throws out false weights in a grocery store, corrects a musician's false note, tells a dancer when she puts a foot slightly wrong, tells the woman wearing an excessively large jewel that she has on a green onion, he totally ignores the traditional ordering regarding pollution. He puts a woman's menstruation cloth into a water jar (16), he washes his hands in a Brahman's water jar after playing with meat in a butchers' shop (49), he takes his daily bath in a well used for bathing after funerals (36). And as the stories above show, he treats the untouchable Mahārs and Māṅgs and women in childbirth as non-polluting. This certainly goes farther than normal holy behaviour in ignoring those things which pollute everyone around! Guṇḍam Rāuḷ as God cannot be polluted; neither does he care about polluting others!

We would not know about Guṇḍam Rāuḷ but for the fact that Cakradhar, the founder of the Mahānubhāv sect, stopped in Ṛddhipur on his way to Rāmṭek, and there found his guru in the Rāuḷ. Both the Rāuḷ and Cakradhar became, in the doctrine of the heterodox Mahānubhāv sect, incarnations of the great God. The sect itself eschewed both caste and the worship of images. It was indeed as radical in some ways as the Rāuḷ himself, and was forced underground, keeping its texts hidden in a secret script. Its members seemed to drift from the mainstream of Hinduism in Maharashtra, continuing their practices quietly on the fringe. Although it is still in existence, the Mahānubhāv sect is no longer radical. It does accept all castes into its holy orders, but treats them differently according to their high or low status.[2] It does have both male and female orders, but aside from this the Rāuḷ's radicality seems to have been lost.

Cokhāmeḷā

Born in the 13th century and living through much of the first half of the 14th century, Cokhāmeḷā was an untouchable Mahār saint-poet who joined the circle around Nāmdev in the early days of the most popular *bhakti* movement in Maharashtra. Jñāneśvar's

commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, popularly known as the *Jñāneśvarī*[3], is held to be the focal point of the development of this *bhakti* tradition. Nāmdev, the follower of Jñāneśvar, seems to have begun the annual pilgrimage to the temple of Viṭhobā at Pandharpur which is the hallmark of the bhakti or *vārkarī-sampradāya*.

Nāmdev and his servant Janābāī, the potter Gorā and a dozen others along with Cokhāmeḷā formed a joyous group of saint-poets whose songs from then on were sung on the pilgrimage to Pandharpur and in the *bhajans* or group singing sessions which marked the local group of *vārkarīs*.

Legends about Cokhāmeḷā and the songs he, his wife, his son and other family members wrote seem to indicate he lived the rather ordinary life of a village Mahār, carrying the village treasury to the tax collector, carrying out dead cattle, mending the village wall. He was turned out of the temple; his wife was afraid to give food to a Brahman, even though he was God in disguise. Many of Cokhāmeḷā's songs are simply songs of praise. One, which is loved by all *vārkarīs*, could concern untouchability—or any human imperfection[4]:

Cane is crooked, but its juice isn't crooked,
Why be fooled by outward appearance?

The bow is bent, but the arrow isn't bent,
Why be fooled by outward appearance?

The river is twisting, but the water isn't twisted,
Why be fooled by outward appearance?

Cokhā is ugly, but his feelings aren't ugly,
Why be fooled by outward appearance?

How then is Cokhāmeḷā radical? Because he protests basically and deeply the idea of pollution[5]:

The only impurity is in the five elements
There is only one substance in the world.
Then, who is pure and who is impure?
The cause of pollution is in the creation of the body.
In the beginning, at the end, there is nothing but pollution.
No one knows anyone who is born pure.
Cokhā says, in wonder, who is pure?

There seems to be no such challenge on the part of Untouchable saints in other *bhakti* traditions. Raidās, a Camār shoemaker of the Hindi-speaking area, Nandnar and Tiruppan, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇāva saints respectively from the Tamil *bhakti* tradition, do not protest in

the way that Cokhāmeḷā and his family members do. Most *bhakti* saints quarrel with God—indeed, the personel relationship with the beloved allows fierce rebuke when God withholds his presence. But Karmameḷā, Cokhāmeḷā's son, quarrels with God about his caste:

You made us lowcaste.
Why don't you face the fact?
Our whole life - leavings to eat.
You should be ashamed of that.

You ate dahī/bhāt in our house.
How can you deny it?

Cokhā's Karmameḷā says,
Why did you give me life?[6]

Are we happy when we're with you?
O cloud-dark One - you don't know!

The low place is our lot; the low place is our lot;
The low place is our lot, O King of Gods.
We never get the good sweet food.
It's a shameful life here for us.

It's a festival of bliss for you
and misery written on our faces.

Cokhā's Karmameḷā says, O God,
Why is this our fate?[7]

While Cokhāmeḷā is well known, and his wife Soyrābāī is occasionally quoted or sung, Karmameḷā is only one of the hundreds of minor poets in the *bhakti* tradition. His songs are preserved only because of his family status, and Cokhāmeḷā's are preserved only because he was such an important member of the early *bhakti* circle. And after Karmameḷā, there are no more Untouchable saints on record, even though Untouchables continue to be *vārkarīs* through the centuries.

Eknāth

Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj of Paiṭhaṇ (1533-1599) was the reviver of the 13th-14th century *bhakti* movement. He edited the version of the *Jñāneśvarī* which we now have; he recorded the biographies of earlier saints, including Cokhāmeḷā's; he developed the popular

kīrtan, a combination of sermon, chanting and song. He also translated Sanskrit texts into Marathi, and wrote traditional *abhaṅgas* and untraditional *bhāruḍs*, drama poems in which dogs, birds, Mahārs, prostitutes, beggars and a host of lowly characters carry the *bhakti* message. Not only that, but a story told by Mahīpati has Eknāth telling the orthodox Paiṭhaṇ Brahmans: "I am convinced that he [a Mahār] has the right to philosophic knowledge. By his reverent devotion he made the Supreme Brahma, existing in the form of Shri Hari, subject to him."[8]

Eknāth's actions were even more radical than his words. He invited Untouchables to the feast prepared for Brahmans on the day of the worship of ancestors, he visited the home of Rānyā Mahār and ate there, he took a starving Mahār thief into his own house, he carried a small Untouchable child home from the hot sands of the river. He proceeded calmly on his way when a Muslim spit on him.

Eknāth's radical actions did not go unchallenged in the holy city of Paiṭhaṇ, the Varāṇasī of Maharashtra. Not only did he have to defend his Marathi translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* before the orthodox Brahmans of Varāṇasī itself, he had to deal with the Brahmāns in Paiṭhaṇ who outcasted him after the incident of the feast served to Untouchables. In this incident, as well as in the one of dining in the Mahār quarter, Eknāth is saved by God. After Eknāth's Brahman ancestors come down from heaven to eat a second feast, and after Eknāth performs the penance imposed upon him, he is forgiven. Viṭhobā himself takes the form of Eknāth to eat at Rānyā Mahār's home so that Eknäth can be seen sitting in his own home at the very same time. And after carrying the Mahār child on his shoulder, Eknāth bathes with all his clothes on. But the gods make his deed known by allowing him to cure a leper because of his compassion! Eknāth is persecuted for many other acts, and at times just out of Brahman truculence or jealousy, and in the course of his being saved from punishment, it is clear to his 18th century biographer Mahīpati that he is an *avatār* of Viṣṇu—although this is not the reason the Brahmans of his own time forgive him. It is rather that Eknāth, the radical Brahman, performs all the purification rites necessary to undo the pollution caused by his polluting acts.

Eknāth's son, Harjpaṇḍit, however, found his father's *kīrtans* and his use of the Marathi *prākṛt* matters for shame, and took up residence in Varāṇasī. He exacted two promises from his father before he agreed to return to Paiṭhaṇ: that his father would not eat

food prepared outside their Brahman home, and that he would not read the *Purāṇa*[9] in Marathi. Eknāth willingly agreed, and the reading of the *Purāṇa* in Sanskrit by Haripaṇḍit replaced the popular *kīrtans* of Eknāth. A rather complex and not too interesting miracle converted Hari to his father's previous practices. But after Eknāth's death, no one continued his open-handed. open-hearted acceptance of all *bhaktas*. Paiṭhaṇ saw no more radical saints.

Gāḍge Mahārāj

Gāḍge Mahārāj or Gāḍge Bābā (1876-1956) was born in a family of the Washerman caste in the district of Daryāpur, not too far from the town of Ṛddhipur in which Guṇḍam Rāüḷ lived seven centuries earlier. Although he was married and had a family, he took *sannyās* in 1905, and from then on travelled over the face of the Marathi speaking area without home or possessions, a true *niṣkām karmayogī*, as his holy pictures proclaim.[10] He wrote nothing, no songs are credited to him, but his actions are known everywhere. He headed for the privy to clean it, or he cleaned the streets, when he first entered a village.[11] He founded *dharmaśālās*, orphanages, homes for the destitute. He preached constantly, interspersing his commands to quit drinking, to be thrifty, to ignore the idea of untouchability, to quit eating meat, with praise to the gods in the old *kīrtan* tradition.

By some incredible fortune, Gāḍge Mahārāj's last *kīrtan* at the Bandra Railway Police Station on November 11, 1956, was recorded.[12] Excerpts from the transcription of it, translated by Maxine Berntsen, indicate Gāḍge Mahārāj's spirit and message better than any analysis:

> These gods in the *tīrths*—Jagannāth, Rāmeśvar—they are gods for making a living, they're not gods. Tell me, what is the god in the *jatrā* made of?
>
> (Audience:) Of stone.
> Right. Bravo. Of what?
> (Audience:) Of stone!

Going to a *tīrth* has nothing to do with God. It's a waste of money. What do you do with Gaṇpati? Throw him in the water and drown him?[13] Someone could file a criminal charge against you. A Satyanārāyaṇ[14] isn't God's *bhakti*. Who does a Satyanārāyaṇ? People who want something.

God isn't in the temple. Where is God? God is in this world. Serve the world! Let's raise our hands and do *bhajan*.

Gopāla Gopāla, Devkinandan Gopāla...

God is in the earth. Janārdan is in the world. What is the proof of this?

God is in man, God is in man.
The saints have testified to this.

Yes, the saints testify that God is in the world. Build a woman's hospital for the poor. Give medicine to the poor. Give the poor clothing now and then. Give them a little rice. Have pity on the poor...

There's a great blot on our Hindustan, a great blot. Try to wash that blot away. What blot is that? Untouchability! What is it?

(Audience:) Untouchability...

Asking about a person's caste—who are you? The person full of pride is the one who asks about caste—who are you? Is the person he asks a man like the one who asked?

(Audience:) Yes, he is!

Is it that one has four hands and the other one and a half? Tell me.

Show that they're different, then talk about untouchability. Say what is different. You and we have all been born by the same route. Or did we come out of our mother's womb and you out of your mother's mouth and armpit? Tell me! There are only two castes of mankind, two. How many?

(Audience:) Two!

Male and female. Just these two castes. There is no third...

Show how we're different. You practice untouchability without any justification! This won't do. Show how we're different. Then say something. Somebody will mention the Scriptures. The Scriptures you can teach to anyone. Gather fifty kids of any caste, teach them, have them recite the Vedas, have them listen to the *Bhāgavat*, whatever you like. But show me what is different originally, from birth. Is your Ganges and ours the same or different?

(Audience:) The same!

The Marāṭhās' river comes out from here and the Māṅgs' from there—is that how it is?

(Audience:) No!

Hey, fellow! You've polluted good water? Do you say that?

(Audience:) Yes!

The Muslims' or Christians' water doesn't get polluted, so what in the hell is wrong with yours? Why does it get polluted? Does a water pot get polluted? Do you purify it or not?

(Audience:) Yes!

How do you purify it? Speak! When a hand has touched the pot, how do you purify the pot? How? By burning it. By burning it with fire? Yes. And does a man get polluted or not?

(Audience:) Yes!

Then pile grass on the bastard's body and light a match. Let him burn...

Gopāla Gopāla, Devkinandan Gopāla

***

Now what are we to make of all of this? Radical saints pop up in various places, from various castes, in widely separated centuries. What are the common messages? What are the common threads? How can such unorthodoxy be seen as holy? What has been their effect?

It is clear that all four saints stem in some way or another from the religious movements begun in the 13th century. Guṇḍam Rāūḷ was recognized as part of an iconoclastic Mahānubhāv movement. It is akin to the *vārkarī bhakti* movement in its stress on devotion as against ritual or learning, in its use of the Marathi language rather than Sanskrit so that the common man could fully participate. But the Mahānubhāvs are not at all related organizationally to the *bhakti* movement which began later in the same century, and from which the next three radical saints come. The *vārkarīs*' pilgrimage to Pandharpur, their honouring of the god Viṭhṭhal or Viṭhobā as the incarnation of the Absolute, their continual production until the 18th century of saint-poets whose songs became, along with the *Jñāneśvarī* and Eknāth's *Bhāgavat* , the texts of their faith—these have no relationship to Mahānubhāv faith. And certainly the history of the two movements diverges,[15] one to become the mainstream sect of the devout common man, the other a by-way, safeguarding

itself by a secret script, an unobtrusive presence, and a reputation for enabling healing at various Mahānubhāv temples.

There is no geographic connection between the four saints. Cokhāmeḷā and Eknāth come from the Desh, the plain to the east of the ghats which line Maharashtra's coast, but Eknāth's home is Paiṭhaṇ on the Godavari river, and Cokhāmeḷā's far to the south is Mangaḷveḍhe, near Pandharpur. Guṇḍam Rāüḷ and Gāḍge Mahārāj come from Vidharbha, the area to the east of the Desh, which in British times was separated from the rest of the Marathi-speaking area.

Three things seem common to the message of all: The lowly can be near God, can teach about God, are beloved of God, can become God. Compassion is shown, and God is expected to be compasionate. And most clearly: there is no recognition of pollution, neither that of the Untouchable, nor in the case of Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, of a woman in her menses or in childbirth! In fact, all the saints in some way or other are associated with women saints, as in the case of Cokhāmeḷā, or raise the status of women by denying their pollution, encouraging their education or considering them to be fully as holy as men.

It is clear that the basic reason all four unorthodox figures were tolerated is because they were seen as holy, either God or touched by God. Guṇḍam Rāüḷ and Eknāth proved their holiness by miracles. Cokhāmeḷā by being recognized by Nāmdev and others as a worthy saint-poet. Gāḍge Mahārāj? That is something of a puzzle. Certainly no one else has the vulgar tongue and rough manner of Gāḍge Bābā, except possibly Guṇḍam Rāüḷ. He was not "a leader" in the *vārkarī* movement; in fact he seems to have been without any group or sect identification. Is the fact that he used the traditional *kīrtan* technique what legitimized him? Was it his obvious self sacrifice, his complete adopting of the homeless, possessionless (except for a *gāḍge*, an earthen pot) constantly wandering state of the true renouncer? Gāḍge Mahārāj claimed no relationship with any God, urged no particular set of beliefs, except "service to the world" and lives that were pure, but not in terms of orthodox purity and pollution.

It must be added that all four saints in some way won their audience through humor or sheer force of personality. Guṇḍam Rāüḷ, mad as his behaviour was, was an endless source of wonder. Cokhāmeḷā's songs, his purity of mind, according to Nāmdev,

made him beloved. Eknāth's drama poems go far beyond his scholarly translations to reach a wide and delighted audience. And Gāḍge Mahārāj—surely no more entertaining saint ever lived. His humor as well as his passionate sincerity won him widespread popularity. In a state where theatre is an intrinsic part of culture from the village to the most sophisticated urban level, the drama of these four saints may be a fairly important factor in their acceptance.

What does all this mean in terms of Maharashtrian life? None of the four saints except Cokhāmeḷā had a direct heir, a follower who carried on in the radical tradition, and the Cokhā tradition died with his son Karmameḷā. Eknāth's descendants were as pious and orthodox as could be; the Mahānubhāvs have produced no figures who could be said to preach unorthodoxy in any way effectively in the general population since the 13th century; even now one can see Gāḍge Mahārāj being "Brahmanized," his rough ways smoothed out, even a temple being built in his honor!

But if there is no radical disciple, is there a carryover of the radical tradition in ordinary Maharashtrian life? Perhaps. Certainly the Untouchable movement in Maharashtra is of a depth and audacity found nowhere else in India.[16] It seems possible that this is due not only to economic and social configurations found in Maharashtra and nowhere else, but also to some legitimacy for such a movement, some enabling factor, present in religious thought. And what about women? Is there more freedom, more expectation of religious creativity? I am tempted to say yes in the light of a number of women saints and women warriors, to say nothing of a recent attempt to train women as ritual priests.[17] But I really do not know. Maharashtra prides herself on her liberal views of humanity, on her great heritage of reformers beginning in the 13th century and continuing to the present moment.[18] Do the saints rise from an undercurrent of belief in equality and rough justice, and in turn reinforce it for following generations?

NOTES

[1]*The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur*, translated and with extensive notes by Anne Feldhaus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984,) is a 13th century biography of Guṇḍam Rāūḷ, also referred to as the Gosāvī in the text, or simply the Rāūḷ. All references are to chapters of this translation.

[2]Interview by Maxine Berntsen with an Untouchable Cambhār caste nun at a Mahānubhāv temple in Palṭhaṇ, 1976. Interview by Eleanor Zelliot with V.B. Kolte, editor of many Mahānubhāv texts, in Nagpur, 1964.

[3]Translated by V.G. Pradhan as the *Jñāneśvarī*, and edited by H.M. Lambert (London: George Allen & Unwin, in two volumes, 1966-1969).

[4]*Abhaṅg* 125 in *Śrī sakal sant gāthā*, Volume I, edited by Śrī Nānāmahārāj Sakhare. (Puṇe: Śrīsadvaṅgmāyā Prakāśan Maṇḍīr, 2nd edition 1967 (1923). The translation is by Maxine Berntsen, with the exception of the substitution of the word "bent" for "crooked" in the second stanza. The Marathi word for "crooked," "bent," "twisted," and "ugly" is *doṅgā*.

[5]*Abhaṅg* 84 in *ibid*. Translated chiefly by B.S. Shinde and Eleanor Zelliot.

[6]*Abhaṅg* 3 of Karmameḷā in *ibid*. Translated by S.G. Tulpule and Eleanor Zelliot.

[7]*Abhaṅg* 4 in *ibid*. Translated by S.G. Tulpule and Eleanor Zelliot.

[8]Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛita* XIX:138-240 has been translated by Justin E. Abbott as *Eknāth* in the Poet-Saints of Maharashtra series, No. 2 (Poona, 1927), 180 on p. 144.

[9]The *Purāṇa* here refers to the eleventh skandha of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, known in Marathi to all *vārkarīs* as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*.

[10]I have collected five photographs of Gāḍge Bābā from the street corner displays of religious literature. Three use the title "Niṣkām karmayogī sant;" one shows him sweeping the street of Goregāvkar Lane in Bombay; the fifth is simply entitled *Sant Śrī Gāḍge Bābā*.

[11]The late Lālītī Khambadkone, my Marathi tutor at the University of Pennsylvania, remembers Gāḍge Mahārāj entering her Ratnagiri village and finding the village folk had throughly cleaned latrine and streets when they heard he was coming! Interview, 1965.

[12]The last *kīrtan* of Gāḍge Mahārāj appears in a biography, *Śrī Gāḍge Mahārāj*, by Gopāl Nīlkaṇṭh Dāṇḍekar, (Bombay: Majestic Book Stall, 1982 (1976), in Marathi). The *kīrtan* has been translated chiefly by Maxine Berntsen.

[13]The Gaṇpati or Gaṇeś festival is probably the most popular festival in Maharashtra. Gaṇeś images are displayed in booths in almost every Hindu

community, and at the end of a ten day period taken in prosession to the river to be immersed.

[14]A *satyanārāyaṇ* is a *pūjā* service generally performed to the deity in return for some blessing. Ironically, the last *kīrtan* was performed at the Bandra Railway Police Station as part of a *satyanārāyaṇ* given by the police for good luck in the year ahead.

[15]The most comprehensive book on the *bhakti* movement in Maharashtra is G.A. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā* . (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1960.) R.D. Ranade, in *Pathway to God in Marathi Literature* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961) has given us prose translations of much *bhakti* literature, together with interpretations of each saint's thought. His work was originally published as *Mysticism in Maharashtra* in 1933, and has been republished as *Mysticism in India: The Poet-Saints of Maharashtra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982.) Literature on the Mahānubhāv Sect is just beginning to appear in English. A translation of the *Mahānubhāv Sūtrapāṭha*, a basic text, has been translated as *The Religious System of the Mahānubhāva Sect* by Anne Feldhaus (New Delhi: Manohar, and Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books, 1983.)

[16]See Eleanor Zelliot, "Learning the Use of Political Means—The Mahars of Maharashtra," in Rajni Kothari, ed. *Caste in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Allied, 1970.)

[17]See "An Age-Old Barrier in India Topples: Hindu Women Assume Priestly Role," *New York Times*, July 3, 1984, p. 4. There is also the Vedic tradition of the Kanyā Kumārī ashram in Maharashtra, and the 19th century Sanskrit training of Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī to support the idea of a respected role for women.

[18]G.B. Sardar, in *The Saint-Poets of Maharashtra*, translated by Kumud Mehta (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1969) discusses the saints' radical thought, but finds it religious, not social, in contrast to the classic work of Mahadeo Govind Ranade in *The Rise of the Marathas* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1961, first published in 1900.) For the radical/reform tradition, see *Rationalists of Maharashtra* (Calcutta: Indian Renaissance Institute, 1962) and Y.D. Phadke, *Social Reformers of Maharashtra* (New Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 2nd edition, 1985).

Ritual and Change in Early Nineteenth Century Society in Maharashtra: Vedokta Disputes in Baroda, Pune and Satara, 1824–1838

by N.K.WAGLE

The disputes in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century Maharashtra over the right to use and hear chants and ritual instructions from the *Vedas*, known as the *vedokta*, stirred the passions of the castes and classes of that region.[1] The Brahmans of Maharashtra, by and large, claimed the *vedokta* as their exclusive privilege, denying the other *jñātīs* (castes) their use on the grounds that they were all Śūdras. According to śāstric tradition, the Kṣatriyas, Brahmans and Vaiśayas are allowed the use of the *vedokta*, but according to its interpretation by the Maharashtrian Brahmans, the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas became extinct in the *Kaliyuga*; the only two remaining *varṇas* are the Brahman and Śūdra.

The Brahmans' denial of the *vedokta* had become a powerful and comprehensive packet of symbol of the social and ritual superiority of the Brahmans of Maharashtra. Conversely, it became a reminder for the non-Brahmans of their ritually enforced inferior posistion in the society. We find anywhere from one to twenty-one Brahman codes of behaviour for the non-Brahmans outlined in the *vedokta* disputes between the Brahmans and the Pāñcāla Devajña Sonāra (1822-1825); between the Cāndraseniya Kāyastha Prabhus (CKP)

and the Brahmans (1789-1830); and between the Kṣatriya-Marathas and the Brahmans (1826-1838). The use of the *Vedas* in any form for the non-Brahman *jñātī*, was denied during the performance of household rituals and other sacraments. However, the rituals according to the Purāṇas (*purāṇokta*) were admissible as befitting the rank of the Śūdras. The other injunctions which had to be adhered to by the non-Brahmans were, in summary[2]:

They must not repeat 1000 names of Viṣṇu, nor the words of the Gītā nor the *śāstras* in Sanskrit. At the time of the *pujā* they should not pronounce the mantras after the Brahman priests. At the funeral and ancestral worship, *piṇḍa* offerings should be of wheat floor and not of rice, as in the case of the Brahmans. They should not offer cooked rice in the fire at the performance of the *garbhādhāna* sacrament. The sandal paste applied to the forehead should be merely be a *ṭikā* (a spot). They should wear the *dhotī* with a double fold but not in the Brahmanic fashion in a single fold. Their images of gods should be made of copper, and they should not worship the Śāḷīgrām. They must not touch an image which has been installed by a Brahman. They should not employ Vaidika Brahmans or their wives. They are not to employ in their homes Brahman trainee-scholars as waterbearers. When they are employed by Brahmans and dine in their homes, they should not say they dined with them but instead that they dined in their houses. For mutual greetings among themselves, they should use the term "daṇḍavat/Rāmrām"; the Brahmans are to be addressed by them loudly with "daṇḍavat". They should not greet each other or the Brahmans with the term "namaskār". They must not, on saluting the Sun and other gods, touch the ground with eight parts of the body but with five parts alone. They must not offer cooked food to the Brahmans at their houses but only uncooked grain. Should a woman become a widow, they must not shave her head. Should she wish to marry , they must not prevent her.

The CKP, the Kṣatriya-Marathas and the Pāñcāla Devajñas, the three upper strata of the Maharashtrian society, did challenge the Brahman sanctions against them which they considered an humiliating and unwarranted intrusion in their social standing as Kṣatriyas in the cases of the Kṣatriya-Marathas and the CKP, and as Viśvakarma Brahmans in the case of the Sonārs. On the face of it, the *vedokta* controversy appears to be yet another regional and local manifestation of Sanskritization: the attempts of the above castes of Maharashtra to elevate themselves from their alleged Śūdra rank to a ritually higher position by adopting the *vedokta*. But the description and analysis of the disputes given here shows that they were symptomatic of an aggressive protest movement challenging the basis of Brahman ritual and social dominance. The loss of Brahman political power in Maharashtra in 1818 and the post 1818 British policy of non-interference with respect to matters of religion and caste of their newly conquered peoples, may have heightened the

militancy of the non-Brahman moves against the Brahman monopoly of the *vedokta*. Finally, the *vedokta* disputes examined in this paper appear as an index of social tension between the Brahman and Non-Brahman, resulting in the transformation of the social attitudes and the ideologies of the latter class [3].

The CKP and the Brahmans: Pune

A major *vedokta* dispute between the CKP and the Brahman took place in 1789-90. The Brahmans of Pen who had originated the dispute of 1789 discovered, much to their chagrin, that the *śāstras*, when articulated properly and when backed up by actual practices, could favour the CKP's *vedokta*. That the "pure Kṣatriya" (*śuddha Kṣatriya*) status of the CKP was fully backed up by the *śāstras*, was the unofficial verdict of Gaṅgādharśāstrī Dikṣīt who was appointed arbiter to resolve the dispute. The famous jurist Rāmśāstrī Prabhuṇe was also in favour of the CKPs' *vedokta*, The Brahmans, however, under the covert support of the Brahman administrators of Pune such as Tātyā Phaḍke and Āpā Baḷvant, resorted to public protestations and agitations including fastings and *dhāraṇas* (sit-ins). This is turn resulted in a major riot between them and CKPs. The Brahman administrators clamped down on the CKP in order to restore order and in 1790 suspended their *vedokta*. It was restored to them in 1796 when the political conditions in Pune had become favourable to them under Bajirāv II's regime.[4]

The first Brahman meeting to discuss the CKPs' *vedokta* in the second decade of the 19th century in Pune, took place at Tuḷsibāg on March 13, 1824.[5] Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī Thatte Vāīkar, the leader of the powerful Brahman faction, had to contend with yet another *vedokta* dispute involving the Pāñcāl Devajña Brāhmaṇ-Sonārs, which lasted from 1822–1825.[6] The Brahmans, who had administered the *vedokta* to the Devajñas, had lost their case in an all Brahman tribunal (with Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī as its undisputed source of inspiration) convened to examine the Devajñas' *vedokta*. The defendants in that tribunal proceeding were six Brahmans of Ahmadnagar who were in favour of the Devajñas' *vedokta* rights. Against them were 106 Brahmans of Pune and Ahmadnagar. The Brahman *pañcāyat* declared the Devajñas Śūdras, as opposed to the latter's claims to be Rathakāras and Viśvakarma Pāñcāl Brahmans. The champion of the Devajñas was Veṅgaḍācārya who argued in the tribunal on their

behalf. The tribunal results came out against the Devajñas' *vedokta*. The Brahmans then urged the British government to impose legal sanctions, such as heavy fines, to implement the non-observance of the *vedokta karmas* on the Devajñas' part. The British did not comply with the Brahmans' request and refused to interfere in the internal matters of the Devajña *jñātī*. The British, after a great deal of deliberation on this matter, laid down under Elphinstone's directives, a policy on matters of caste which was to remain on the statutes for a long time to come. The avowed policy was to "maintain a strict neutrality among all sects and religions, and show a firm resolution never to interfere in them unless the public peace shall be disturbed."[7] This was something of a reversal of the policy of the Maratha king Shivaji, his descendants and the Peshwas. Their practice had been to sustain the rulings of the religious tribunals, when the subject matter had a bearing on the *śāstras*. Violation of the tribunal rulings in the pre-British period was punishable by the state.[8] Such rulings of the tribunals, however, were not construed as legal statutes; they were subject to change and could be made void or amended in subsequent tribunals.

Elphinstone, in an official memorandum on the Devajña-Brahman dispute to Chaplin, the Deccan Commissioner, states[9]:

> The Brahmins be allowed to enforce the decision against their own kind by means usually employed to maintain caste disciplines. If sonars depart from the rules laid down in the shastras they are guilty of heresy, but heresy especially against the Hindu religion is not an offence which we ought to punish.

The British policy was correctly interpreted by the Devajñas as a tacit endorsement of their *vedokta*, and as permission to set their *jñātī's* norms without Brahman interference. In other words, the Devajñas could practice the *vedokta* with or without Brahman assistance. They soon had the opportunity to test the British policy by administering the *vedokta* to their *jñātī* with priests of their own *jñātī*. They dismissed from their services the Pune Brahmans who had been their family priests before, but who had refused to conduct their rituals with *vedokta*. When the dismissed Brahmans laid charges against the Devajñas with the British, the latter refused to interfere in what they interpreted as the internal matters of a caste. The Devajñas' prerogative to define their *jñātī's* norms was thus ratified. The British decision of 1825 to let the castes regulate their ritual codes, without Brahman interference may be construed as a major policy change with regard to the *śāstras* (involving Brahman ritual codes). The Brahmans remained technically without the legal

and political muscle to enforce restrictions on the aspirations of the non-Brahman castes for higher social and ritual status. The only possible way the Brahmans could reiterate their dominance on the other castes needing their ritual services was to strengthen their internal unity by imposing extra-legal socio-religious sanctions such as the withdrawal of their services from their recalcitrant clients. The CKP-Brahman disputes in Pune, Satara and Baroda (1824-1838) have to be viewed in the framework of the British policy of non-interference with regard to the *jñāti* norms.

The leadership of the Brahman faction opposed to CKP *vedokta* was in the hands of Brahman leaders such as Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī, Malhār Śrotī, Bāḷājīpant Nātu and Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan. Interestingly, all these leaders had intimate dealings with the English administrators and they were in no sense orthodox rural Brahman priests. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī and Malhār Śrotī were the official *śāstrīs* employed by the British in their courts to assist them with Hindu law cases. Nātu, a statesman-politician, was a known collaborator with the British. He owed his position to English patronage.[10] Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan, a Brahman military commander, had deserted Bajirāv II and had sided with the British. Therefore, he had been allowed to retain his vast *jāgir* at Miraj.[11] Out of the Brahman faction Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī and Śrotī were the leaders in the *vedokta* dispute with the Devajñas. Both had probably understood the implications of the new British policy towards castes and, in particular, their refusal to support the traditional Brahman prerogatives to define *śāstric* norms for others.

Soon after his arrival in Pune in 1825, the Śaṅkarācārya of Karvir and Sankeshvar *maṭha* (a Deśastha Brahman) found himself enmeshed in the CKP-Brahman *vedokta* dispute.[12] The faction led by Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī was against the recognition of the three *karmas* of the CKPs as Kṣatriyas and their *vedokta*.. Rāghavācārya's Brahman faction, opposing him, was in favour of the CKPs' *vedokta*. On April 18, 1826, in an all Brahman meeting held at Tuḷsibāg and organized by Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī, a resolution was passed stating that the CKP had no rights to the *karmas* according to the *Vedas*. A letter of agreement with the signatures of the Brahmans who were present at that meeting was prepared. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī administered *prāyascitta* (expiation) to some of the Brahmans present in that meeting who had given their consent to the CKP's *vedokta* previously.[13] There was a move in the meeting to persuade Rāghavācārya's Brahman faction which was in favour of the CKP's

vedokta to take *prāyascitta* and effect an overall unity (*ekī karāvī*) of the Brahmans by dissolving the factions. At that juncture, Vajraṭakaśāstrī demanded arbitration by the Śaṅkarācārya, before the other Brahman faction led by Rāghavācārya could agree to endorse the resolution drafted by Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī. Vajraṭaka then gave a bond of surety, *katbā*, to the Śaṅkarācārya stating on May 11, 1826: If he were not to present to the Śaṅkarācārya the evidence of a written and signed letter of Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī, addressed to the CKP Viṭhṭhal Devajī of Baroda, in favour of the CKPs' *vedokta* rights, then he would be willing to abide by the decision of the Śaṅkarācārya. Furthermore, if the Śaṅkarācārya wished, he would be prepared to take a *prāyascitta* (for favouring the CKP's *vedokta*). He would not then engage in debate over this matter. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī when asked to reply to this challenge, gave a counter-assurance dated May 24, 1826 stating: If the letter with contents as stated by Vajraṭakaśāstrī were to be produced, its authorship should be verified by the Śaṅkarācārya and Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan. After verification of the same and if it turned out that the letter was his, then he would be willing to abide by their rulings on this matter. The alleged letter turned out to be the true letter of Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī and its contents were the same as stated by Vajraṭakaśāstrī in his surety.

The dispute between the Brahman factions over the CKPs' *vedokta*, however, continued to simmer. Dhoṇḍobhaṭ Khare and forty other Brahmans, including the Dravida Brahmans, ostracised (*bahiṣkāra*) Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī because, although their opinion was according to the *śāstras*, he had lied about the letter and had given expiation without any good reason to a few Brahmans previously, for siding with the CKP's *vedokta*. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī on the next day went to Rahātekar's *vāḍā* (palace) and invited the Brahmans of his faction to that place. He welcomed them with *gaṅdhākṣtā* (reception by applying pure and sanctified objects), gave them *dakṣiṇā* (gift) and received blessings in return. All these deliberate acts of Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī were meant to win the other Brahmans over to his side and establish himself as an honourable member of the Brahman *jñātī* of Pune. This was meant to neutralize the ostracism sanction imposed on him by Dhoṇḍobhaṭ Khare. Khare went to Rahātekar's *vāḍā* and started telling other Brahmans, who had gathered there, the news of the sanctions against Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī and the reasons for imposing them. Bāḷājīpant Nātu called in the police and forced him out of the *vāḍā*. Khare was locked up in the Company *sarkār's* iail.

Khare filed a defamation suit against Nātu for dishonouring him in public. Nātu was interrogated by the British authorities and it was determined at the end of the enquiry that Khare's excommunication ruling was justified.

After this event, both Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's and Rāghavācārya's Brahman factions approached the Śaṅkarācārya for mediation and indicated their willingness to act upon his decision. In the debate that ensued, Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī argued that the śāstric interpretation allowing *vedokta* for the CKP should be declared false (*khoṭā*). But since the *śāstras* were found to support the CKP no agreement could be reached and the decision was kept pending.

In the meantime the CKP deputation led by Baḷvantrāv Malhār Khāsnavīs and Ānandrāv Rāvjī met with the Śaṅkarācārya to convince him of their case for the CKPs' Vedic *karma* which they said was traditionally observed in their families. They presented the documentary evidence which was in accordance with the *śāstras* (*śāstrānumate nirvāha jālyāce sādhan*). The CKP leaders also showed the Śaṅkarācārya the original copies of the awards of the various previous governments and those emanating from the Brahmans of Banaras sustaining their *vedokta*. They also gave him a copy of a two hundred year old *Reṇukā Mahātmya* of the *Skandha Purāṇa* which explicitly stated the CKPs' Kṣatriyahood. According to the *ṛḍhī* (practice) and the *śāstras*, the CKP argued, the evidence for their *vedokta* was on their side.

Both Rāghavācārya and the Śaṅkarācārya appear to have been convinced of the CKPs' *vedokta* and their three *karmas*. But Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī remained adamant. He convened a meeting of the Brahman tribunal at Bhāū Dātār's *vāḍā* on December 5, 1826. Mediators belonging to his way of thinking were appointed to settle the issue in a debate. Only Rāghavācārya was invited to attend the meeting to represent the CKPs' side. After a long debate, it seemed that the meeting could not refute the śāstric interpretations which supported the CKPs' claims. Eventually the tribunal came to a settlement which was not backed up by the *śāstras* but which was arrived at on the basis of social conventions (*vyavahārikāvar śāstra soḍun āle*). The influential Pune Brahman leaders such as Gopāḷrāv Rāmcandra Paṭvardhan and Baḷvantrāv Mahādev Rāste successfully persuaded the reluctant Rāghavācārya to side with them. A settlement was effected by shunting aside the śāstric interpretations (*śāstrānumat soḍun*). A resolution stating that the "Cāndrasenī

Kāyasthas do not have the rights to the Vedic *karmas*" was thus passed unanimously. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī apologized to Dhoṇḍobhaṭ Khare and personally gave him *gaṅdhākṣatā*. The Brahmans, all united in their resolution to debar the CKPs from the *vedokta*, went to Motibāg to meet with the Śaṅkarācārya to inform him. He apparently gave his consent on learning about the resolution.

The Śaṅkarācārya went back to his Karvir *maṭha* and wrote to the CKP leaders in January 1827 giving them the details of the events which took place in Pune. At the same time he assured them that, as far as he was concerned, the CKPs were entitled to the *vedokta* according to the *śāstras* and past practices. Evidently he chose not to divulge to the CKPs that he had been coerced into giving a separate letter to the Brahmans denying the *vedokta* to the CKPs.

The Pune episode as retold by the Śaṅkrācārya is indicative of the intensity of the Brahmans' lobbying efforts in spite of śāstric support. The persuasive quality of Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī must have been impressive to get the non-*vedokta* motion through the Brahman assemblies. In the end the Brahmans' solidarity, despite their initial squabbling, emerged as the key issue. The overwhelming documentary proof in support of the CKPs' *vedokta* rights did not amount to much. The verdict of the *dharmaśāstra*, "the science of *dharma*", was countermined by the weight of *vyavahāraśāstra*, "the science of political and social expediency".

The discomfiture of the Śaṅkarācārya who was dragged into this dispute soon became apparent. But in any event he could not have remained aloof from an issue of this dimension. As a *guru* of the Brahmans, when asked, he had to intercede in the factional infighting of the Brahmans of Pune. But as a *dharmasaṃsthāpaka* (establisher of the *dharma*) he had also to take into account the interests of the rich, powerful and articulate CKPs holding important positions in Pune, Satara and Baroda. On November 9, 1826 while the dispute was in progress, the Śaṅkarācārya wrote to Rāghavācārya[14] and said that he gave a letter to Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's faction which "neither disapproved or approved of the śāstric inference concerning the CKPs' *vedokta*." He also admitted to Rāghavācārya that he did this under pressure from his Brahman constituency and out of fear that Nātu and Paṭvardhan would harm his estates. He further assured Rāghavācārya that his letters to the Brahmans written under duress be cancelled because the CKP had the right to the *vedokta*. On December 4, 1826, Raghavācārya

under pressure himself sided with Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's faction and supported a "unanimous" resolution of the Brahmans denying *vedokta* to the CKPs.[15] The Śaṅkarācārya went public and addressed his *ājñāpatra* ("command letter") (October 15, 1827) to the Brahmans of various religious centres as follows[16]:

> The Prabhus are not the Cāndraseniya, but of mixed origin (*saṃkaraj*). No Brahman should therefore perform Veda *karmas* for them. If any are performed then that Brahman who performs them shall be considered as fallen (*bhṛṣṭa*). Further, the Sonārs are not entitled to the *vedokta*. Jingars should not be allowed to wear sacred threads. I endorsed the views of Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan on these matters.

The Śaṅkaracārya relented on this issue on November 26, 1830, and revoked his October 15, 1827 decree in which he had denied the CKPs' *vedokta*. In a remarkable public turnabout, he announced in his letter addressed to the Brahmans of religious centres, that he initially was against the elimination of the CKPs' Vedic *karmas* (*vaidik karma uccheda*). But Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan and Bāḷājī Nātu threatened him that if he did otherwise, they would implicate him in a conspiracy plot against the British. It was out of fear, the Śaṅkarācārya writes, that he issued a decree against the CKPs' *vedokta*. He also adds that the British Collector of Dharwad took him into his confidence and offered him his protection and, under oath, took an affidavit which absolved him from the conspiracy charges. The Śaṅkarācārya ends his letter by asking the Brahmans to sustain the CKPs' *vedokta*.[17]

The CKP and the Brahmans: Baroda

The ramifications of the Pune *vedokta* dispute are to be observed in the 1825 disturbance in Baroda. But the Brahmans had to encounter there a well-entrenched CKP political lobby in the upper echelon of the state bureaucracy. The Primeministership of the State of Baroda, for instance, was in the hands of the CKP statesman Rāvjī Ābājī and his descendants from 1793 to the 1820s. The Pune *vedokta* against their *jñātī* was as much of interest to them as for the CKPs living in Pune and Satara. The solidarity of the CKP *jñātī*, stretching from Baroda to Satara and beyond, and the corporate spirit with which they acted to preserve their *vedokta*, is evident from the very beginning of the dispute in Pune. The Śaṅkarācārcya's January 1827 letter explaining the history of the Pune dispute from 1824 to 1826 was addressed to Bhagvantrāv

Malhār of Satara, Nārāyāṇrāv Sitārām, Viṭhṭhalrāv Bābājī Phaṇse and Viṭhṭhalrāv Devajī Dighe, the latter three being from Baroda.[18] Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī, the leader of the Brahman faction of Pune against the CKPs' *vedokta*, had written a letter to Viṭhṭhalrāv Devajī in 1824 that there was proof available in support of the CKPs' *vedokta*. The letter was brought back from Baroda to Pune and proved to be a major source of embarrassment for Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī.[19]

In 1825, the Baroda Maharashtrian Brahmans and the CKPs found themselves in a situation of turmoil which was serious enough to merit the scrutiny of I.P. Willoughby, the Assistant in charge of the British residency at Baroda. On July 30, 1825, he wrote a dispatch to Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay[20]:

> A dispute of religious nature has lately arisen between the Deccan Brahmins and the Prabhoo caste which has caused some embarrassment to the Gaikawars government, and a temporary cessation of the Publick life...At Poona the Deccan Brahmans are stated to be divided into two parties, the one denying, the other acceding to the Prabhoo certain religious rights and privileges which form the subject of the existing disputes. One of the latter party by name Babacharya came to Baroda in the company of Narasingrao Ghorpade and took up his abode with Vithalrao Devaji, a Praboo and the minister of the Gaikawar government.

Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī wrote from Pune to the Brahmans at Baroda requesting them to excommunicate Bābācārya if he refused to undergo the *prāyascitta* (expiation) required because he had "officiated in an improper manner with the Prabhoo". Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī also demanded that Bābācārya should be handed over to the Brahmans for a religious trial. This was refused.

With the arrival of the Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī at Baroda from Udaipur, there was an escalation of tension between the CKPs and the Brahmans of Baroda. The Śaṅkarācārya summoned Bābācārya to "attend him" but was ignored. Because of this refusal the Śaṅkarācārya issued a declaration of excommunication against him. He then expounded on the CKPs' non-eligibility for the Vedic *karmas* and ruled that the signed documents of the Brahmans of Pune who had approved the CKPs' *vedokta* were to be considered null and void. In order to enforce his decision, the Śaṅkarācārya went personally with the Brahmans to the palace of the Maharaja of Baroda with the resolution of fasting and not dispersing until all their demands were met by the government. The Gaikwad's government informed the Śaṅkarācārya and the Brahmans that "both the parties should be heard, and it would not interfere unless they agreed" to such a mode of adjudication. In effect, the Gaikwad's

government wanted to institute a regular *pañcāyat* proceeding in which each party was required to give their complaints in writing, and a tribunal was then set up to settle the dispute. There was a legal deadlock at this juncture. The Brahmans would not give their consent to this government proposal and the government remained firm in its intentions.[21] At the end of the fourth day, the Śaṅkarācārya decided to end the protest (the fast was actually broken on the 6th day), saying that he and the Brahmans would appeal to the British government for redress. He went straight from the Maharaja's palace to the British Resident's place and deputed two Brahmans to request British intervention in their cause because "justice had been denied to them by His Highness the Gaikawar". Willoughby, the Assistant Resident refused to intervene "in terms of civility and politeness."[22] On the sixth day the Śaṅkarācārya broke the fast and sent a petition to Elphinstone complaining against the Gaikwad's government and the Resident and requesting intervention on behalf of the Brahmans.

Willoughby's perception and analysis of the *vedokta* crisis appears to favour the CKPs' case.[23] The CKP according to Willoughby had been enjoying the *vedokta* privileges at Baroda at least from the time of Rāvjī Āpājī, that is for over 30 years.[24] Willoughby feels that the CKP made two "reasonable propositions". First, they were willing to act in conformity with a decree issued by Bajirāv II, "himself a Brahman", that the CKP should act according to Gāgābhaṭṭa's book.[25] The second proposition was that the dispute should be referred to the Ciṭṇīs and Potṇīs, the CKP caste leaders at Satara, and they would accept their ruling on the subject. Willoughby bemoans the Brahmans' unwillingness to agree to these proposals. The Brahmans obviously knew that saying yes to the CKP proposals would be tantamount to their acceptance of the CKP *vedokta*, since Bajirāv's decree of 1796 had allowed them that privilege. Baḷvantrāv Ciṭṇīs, the acknowledged leader of the CKPs was busy at that juncture defending the CKPs *vedokta* at Satara. Willoughby was naive in suggesting that because the ex-Peshwa Bajirāv was himself a Brahman, the Brahmans should abide by his regulations. Willoughby also criticises the legality of the unilateral decision of the Śaṅkarācārya to excommunicate Bābācārya because there was no unanimity among the Brahmans over this issue. Willoughby is aware of the powerful CKP lobby at the Baroda court. Viṭhṭhalrāv Devjī, Nārāyaṇ Sitārām and Viṭhṭhalrāv Bābājī were "the principle men of rank and respectability of the Prabhoo

caste of Baroda".[26] The latter two had officially complained to Willoughby stating[27]:

> The Brahmin caste are at present labouring to the utmost of their ability to dismiss our respectability and are interfering with long established privileges, to deprive us of them.

Willoughby, in keeping with the British policy of non-interference in religious matters, was convinced that the[28]

> Gaikawar Government itself was likely to come to a just decision in the matter of the dispute. Religious feelings which might be supposed to influence it in favour of the priesthood, would be counter balanced by the weight and power of the Prabhoos [which they] necessarily derive from their holding the principle situation in this government.

As the *vedokta* dispute was reaching a critical stage (perhaps because of the Brahman fasting and the stoppage of the government work), the Gaikwad's government sounded out Willoughby to learn from him the British government's attitude towards the problem. A confidential clerk was sent to the Residents office to seek advice on the subject. But according to Willoughby he came to him to find out if the British were contemplating interference over this matter. The clerk was assured by Willoughby that the Gaikwad was at full liberty to exercise his own judgement on the subject and that he had not the power nor inclination to dissent from the Gaikwad's decision.

The Baroda dispute unexpectedly gives us an insight into the origin of the *vedokta* dispute in Pune started there by Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's faction in 1824. The petition sent by the Śaṅkarācārya at Baroda (translation in Baroda, July 26, 1825) reads:

> Lately Vithalrao Diwan sent a Karkoon to Poona to procure for himself liberty to perform the Shrota rite. Having given many of the shastrees sums of money, he procured from them a paper with their signature the purport of which is that Prabhus might perform the sacrifice.

The Śaṅkarācārya further states that some of the Brahmans who endorsed the Vedic *śrauta* sacrifices for Viṭhṭhalrāv Devajī were given *prāyaścittas* by the Pune Brahmans and some such as Bālācārya left for Baroda to take refuge in Viṭhṭhalrāv's house.[29]

An 1826 letter attributed to the Śaṅkarācārya of Karvir gives us details concerning the Baroda Brahman politics and exposes the fraud perpetrated by the person claiming to be the Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī[30]:

> Viṭhṭhalrāv Devajī Dighe under the supervision of Baḷkṛṣṇa Dikṣīt Paṭvardhan had a major sacrifice performed for him for which lakhs of rupees were spent. A

rival Brahman, Prabhākar Dikṣīt alias Bhāū Purāṇic, instigated the Maharaja of Baroda against Viṭhṭhalrāv, saying that since the execution of the *śrauta* sacrifices were the prerogative of the king only, Viṭhṭhalrāv, a CKP, was undermining the Gaikwad's prestige by its performance.

A person claiming to be the Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī arrived in Baroda. Promising him 50 thousand rupees, Prabhākar Dikṣīt won him over to his side to bring into disrepute the CKP *jñāti* to which Viṭhṭhalrāv belonged and to stir up the agitation against the CKP in Baroda. The other Brahmans in this conspiracy were: Ātmārām Bhaṭ Ṭakle of Nasik, Bābā Marāṭhe, Janārām Pādhye, Bābā Paṭvardhan and Sadāśiv Bhaṭ Jogḷekar. The pretender Śaṅkarācārya completed his end of the bargain. He then asked for the payoff the Brahman conspirator had promised him. Not getting it, he beat the Brahmans. The king's mother came to know of this event and chastised Prabhākar Dikṣīt for working against the interests of the State of Baroda and ordered him to settle his difference with Viṭhṭhalrāv. Viṭhṭhalrāv treated him as a Brahman and forgave him.

In a separate letter written to Viṭhṭhalrāv Devajī in 1826, the Śaṅkarācārya of Karvir (Vidyā Narasiṃha Bhāratī) informed him that a person claiming to be the Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī was a pretender and that he advised the Gaikwad's government to take proper disciplinary steps with regard to this matter.[31]

The CKP and the Brahmans: Satara

The 1824–25 Pune and Baroda *vedokta* had repercussions in Satara. Under Baḷvantrāv Ciṭṇīs' leadership, Satara soon became the nerve centre of the CKP *vedokta*. The dispute had resulted in major rioting in religious centres such as Vai and Mahuli. Both these centres came under the jurisdiction of Satara state. We find the Māmledār of Vai on 16 October 1825, convening a gathering of the leading Brahmans of Vai to read them the royal proclamation to put a stop to the rioting caused by the dispute concerning *jñātī* (*jñātī prakarṇī khaṭle*).[32] The Pune Brahman resolution[33] of December 5, 1826 was the culmination of Brahman attempts to generate a consensus against the CKPs use of the *vedokta*. Brahman discipline was considered restored. The CKPs were to be denied the *vedokta*, and relegated to the status of Śūdras. Although the resolution was binding on the Brahmans only since it could not have had the backing of the British government, its import was a major blow to the CKPs' prestige.

The Brahmans evidently kept the pressure on. On April 18, 1827 a joint Brahman letter signed by Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī, Malhār Śrotī, Dājī Dikṣīt, Kuppaśāstrī, Govindācārya, Aṣṭaputre and Sāṭheśāstrī

informed the Brahman scholars of Mahuli of the details of the Pune December resolution and asked them to comply with its contents.[34] Cintāmaṇ Pāṇḍurang Paṭvardhan, the activist Brahman leader with political clout, endorsed the December resolution in a June 12, 1827 letter addressed to the Brahmans of Mahuli.[35] The pronouncements of the Brahman leaders exacerbated the already tense situation in Satara and its suburb, Mahuli. On September 22, 1827 the Brahmans of Mahuli filed a petition to the Maharaja remonstrating that[36]:

> The 'parabhus' who are violating their *ñātī* duties (*ñātīdharma*) and bribing the Brahmans to perform vedic karmas for them, should be punished. The disturbances caused by such actions should be controlled. [The government should ratify] the ostracism imposed on the Brahmans who continue to perform the *vedic karmas*. If the rioting arising out of this dispute were not to be stopped, the deteriorated situation will end up in the death of some of the Brahmans. We shall praise the Maharaja if order is restored.

Evidently to maintain the pressure on the Brahmans, we find the Śāṅkarācārya's 'papal bull' on October 15, 1827 prohibiting the CKPs' *vedokta* and threatening sanctions of ostracism for recalcitrant Brahmans.[37]

The Brahmans had also appealed to the British ruling authority to intervene in the *vedokta* issue. The Brahman agitation reached the ears of Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay, when he was on a visit to the Tadulvadi religious fair in 1827. A huge melee of Brahmans, about ten or fifteen thousand strong, gathered in the fair ground and demonstrated before Malcolm. The Brahman deputation which met the governor told him that the Prabhus and other Śūdras were violating the norms of Hindu religion by their performance of rituals and sacraments according to *vedokta* to which they are not entitled. As supreme ruler of the country, the British, they said, should stop this irreligious activity. Malcolm, however, advised the Brahmans to direct their complaint to the Satara Maharaja and reiterated the British policy of upholding the authority of each caste to regulate its internal affairs and the government's firm determination never to interfere in matters of religion.[38]

The year 1827 found the CKPs, too, engaged in intense lobbying activities with the Satara government. More importantly, they began solidifying the internal organization of their jñātī against the Brahman sanctions. The CKP*jñātī's* Satara resolution of June 5, 1827, which I have translated from Marathi in full and given in the appendix, asserts the CKPs' rights to the *vedokta* and three

karmas, due to them as Kṣatriyas.[39] The resolution attacks what the CKPs consider as Brahman duplicity in monopolising jobs and positions in society at the expense of others. It attacks their hypocrisy in no uncertain terms and urges the CKP *jñātī* to dispense with the services of uncooperative Brahmans, even if this action meant that CKPs would have had to assume all the six traditional Brahmanic functions (*ṣaṭkarmas*) including the acts of sacrificing for others, teaching the *Vedas* and receiving remuneration for services rendered. The CKPs were careful to note that they would perform the six ***karmas*** for their *jñātī* members only. The resolution urged the *jñātī* members either to set up the sacred fire without the assistance of Brahmans or to sustain one which was originally set up by them. The establishment and kindling of the sacred fire with Vedic *mantras* are essential to most of the *saṃskaras* and related rituals. Fire is at the centre of the Brahman ritual system. The act of kindling the fire (*agnisiddha*) without the presence of a Brahman indicated the extent of the CKPs' seriousness in defying the Brahman sanctions. To underscore the CKPs' defiance, Baḷvantrāv Citṇīs did kindle the fire on his own, thus setting an example for his *jñātī*.

The CKP lobbying effort to undermine the Brahman boycott was in full swing in the Satara Royal Court and elsewhere. The CKP wrote to the Satara Government asking for clarification concerning the Brahman move[40]:

> The Brahmans in Pune and other places have created a *gramanya* and have stopped performing our ancestral *vedokta karmas*. We do not object to the Brahmans performing the rituals for us, but what step should we be taking, if they fail to show up for the rituals. Especially when we are capable of performing the *vedokta karmas* ourselves.

The reply from the Satara government was received on August 24, 1827[41]:

> A *jñātī* has the authority to regulate its norms. The government policy is not to interfere. If the Brahmans have stopped their services, nothing can be done about it. But if your *jñātī* were to execute the rituals without the Brahmans, the government will neither object nor will it help you. The Company *sarkar* is of the same opinion, and has endorsed it to this *sarkar*.

Baḷvantrāv Citṇīs construed this ruling of the Satara government as a tacit approval of the CKP *jñātī's* resolution to carry on independently with the *vedokta* in the absence of the Brahmans. Baḷvantrāv's access to the Maharaja's inner circle, as his secretary,

no doubt was an asset and added more weight to his interpretations of the Satara government's ruling which he offered to his *jñāti*.

Ciṭṇīs soon communicated with his *jñāti* constituency spread outside Satara in such places as Tasgav, Miraj, Karvir, Shapur and Belgav. In a letter dated February 8, 1828[42], he urged his *jñāti* to perform *vedokta karmas* without the presence of Brahmas. "The Çompany, too," he wrote, "had no objections if we were to do so." He substantiated his advice by sending a copy of the Satara government's August 24, 1827 ruling. Ciṭṇīs told his *jñāti* that the Satara ruling tended to be sympathetically inclined (*sarkār ānukul*) towards the CKP stand on performing the *vedokta* on their own.

It appears that, on the one hand, Ciṭṇīs was legitimising for his *jñāti* a ritual function which was a prerogative of the Brahmans and, on the other hand, he was trying to get the government's legal sanction for his defiant actions. Ciṭṇīs was not, as he claims in his letter, against the Brahmans *per se*. He emphasized to his caste constituency that he would have no objections if the Brahmans were to administer the *vedokta karmas*, but that the CKPs, too, had the legal and moral right to perform the *vedokta* in the event of their non-cooperation. Ciṭṇīs' own action in setting up and kindling the sacred fire created an uproar in the Brahman *jñāti*. Finally, emphasising the seriousness of the *vedokta* dispute, he admonished his *jñāti* to offer a united front because "it is not possible to achieve the *jñāti's* objectives if individual members work alone."[43]

The Brahmans of Satara were alarmed at Ciṭṇīs' innovation in establishing the sacred fire on his own. Paṇḍitrāv, the minister in the Satara government in charge of ecclesiastical matters, and the learned Brahmans of Satara and Mahuli appealed to Pratāpsiṃh (November 9, 1828)[44]:

> The fire established (*agnīsiddha*) by Ciṭṇīs should be extinguished. There is no such usage allowed [for the CKPs]. There was no such practise during the regimes of Śivājīmahārāj, Śāhūmahārāj and the Peshwas. You should restrain Ciṭṇīs from carrying on with this innovation.

Ciṭṇīs has anticipated this Brahman move and a day before on November 8, 1828, he himself had filed a petition with the Maharaja on behalf of the CKP *jñātīs*[45]:

> The Brahmans are not performing for us *vedokta saṃskāras* such as *garbhādhāna* which they used to perform before and are not allowing others to do so. They are creating new texts to disprove our rights to the *vedokta*. We have kept alive the old fire which was with us; and there is no innovation

involved in keeping alive the old fire. After an investigation, the Mahārāj should give his rulings on the issue.

By 1830 the matters seems to have cooled down a bit for the CKP. The Śaṅkarācarya on November 26, 1830, in his major public reversal of position wrote his letter to the Brahmans endorsing the full *vedokta karmas* to the CKPs and urging the Brahmans of the religious centres to do so.[46]

Kṣatriya-Marathas and the Brahmans: Satara

The British policy of non-interference in *jñāti* matters had also been the policy of the Satara government, dictated, as it had been until 1830, by the Council of Administration headed by the British resident.[47] The Kṣatriya Maratha lineages of Satara[48] (*Kṣatriya Marāṭhā Maṇḍalī*) (all of them interlinked by kinship ties) had lodged a complaint with Pratāpsiṃha, the Maharaja of Satara, about the defamatory statement found in the letters of the Śaṅkarācārya and Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan concerning the alleged non-existence of Kṣatriyas in the *kaliyuga*. The implication of the letters that the Marathas were to be designated as Śūdras without the rights to the *vedokta karmas* was enough to generate a feeling of ill-will towards the Brahmans.[49] On the investigation—the CKP lobby in the Satara upper echelon administrative circles must have contributed in exacerbating the Maratha sentiments—it was discovered that the *saṃskāras* such as *muñjī* (*upanayana*, thread ceremony) were performed for the Marathas according to the purāṇic rites (*purāṇokta*) meant for the Śūdras.[50] Pratāpsiṃha's official response, indicating his unwillingness to intercede on behalf of the Kṣatriya-Maratha lineages of Satara, was considered by them as an affront to their prestige. In an 1828 letter, copies of which were forwarded to the Brahmans of various religious centres and to the important Maratha and Brahman political leaders, the lineages wanted the Maharaja to order the Brahmans to delete the objectionable lines from their proclamations and to issue new ones. In an angry tone, the lineages informed the Maharaja that the policy of non-interference in the *jñāti* need not mean a license to allow the other *jñātis* who were not in conflict with either the CKP or the Brahmans, to be entrapped into the argument and maligned. The letter reminded the Maharaja that if the objectionable sentences were to remain in the Brahman proclamations, then the Kṣatriya-Maratha

lineages would be led to believe that the Maharaja was siding with the Brahmans.[51] Pratāpsiṃha officially took no notice of that letter. In any event in 1828, he could not have flouted the British policy directives in the regency period (1819–1829). It was important for him, however, to establish the Kṣatriya heritage of the Maratha state, including that of his family, by linking them to the ancient solar and lunar lineages (*surya* and *soma vaṃśi*). That Pratāpsiṃha was anxious to verify his Kṣatriya ancestry is clear from his earlier attempts in sending Catursingh Bhosale and Kānhobā Phaḍṇīs to enquire about his genealogical links with the Udaipur Sisodias in the year 1822.[52] On October 3, 1822 the Udaipur *kulaguru* of the Rāṇā of Udaipur wrote to the British Resident of Satara and requested permission to come to Satara and show the Maharaja the genealogical links of the House of Udaipur to the House of Śivājī to which Pratāpsiṃha belonged.[53] On December 11, 1828 Pratāpsiṃha took permission from the British Resident to send emissaries to the Royal collateral lineage-houses of Tanjore, Nagpur and Udaipur to enquire into their Kṣatriya status and *vedokta* and their genealogies.[54] Pratāpsiṃha would take major initiatives concerning the Kṣatriyahood and other caste matters only after gaining full control of the Satara Raj in 1830.

In 1830 he convened a meeting of scholars to prove that Kṣatriyas existed in the *kaliyuga* (to refute Brahman claims to the contrary), that they had the *vedokta karma* rights and that his lineage and those of other Marathas to whom he was related (*āpta sambandha*), belonged to the Kṣatriya *varṇa*. The peculiarity of this assembly of scholars was that one of the scholars invited to participate was Viṭhṭhal Sakhārām Pārasnīs (Ābā Pārasnīs), a CKP, and a brilliant linguist, proficient in both Sanskrit and Persian (Grant Duff, the historian of the Marathas, in 1818–19 used to consult him for the Persian sources of Maratha history).[55] As was customary in the preceding periods, the adjudication of issues involving *śāstras* was the prerogative of an all Brahman committee. Thus the 1830 meeting was not just going to be one more Brahman *sabhā* (assembly) but a *pañcāyat* (tribunal) including a non-Brahman member. Pratāpsiṃha had thus innovatively expanded the constituency of the tribunal to accommodate both Brahman and non-Brahman views. He might have thought that since the award of the tribunal would affect both the Kṣatriya and Maratha *varṇas*, the *pañcāyat* membership should contain representatives of both.

Both Dongre[56] and Rane[57] claim that there were opposing parties in this tribunal: Viṭhṭhal Sakhārām Pārasnīs representing the Kṣatriya interests and Rāghavācārya Gajendragaḍkar, on the Brahman side opposing the Kṣatriyahood of the Marathas and their *vedokta* rights. There is no such indication in the *Siddhāntavijaya*, the book which is based on the proceedings of the tribunal and which was compiled by Ābā Pārasnīs at Pratāpsiṃha's behest. Rāghavācārya was the same Brahman scholar who had championed the CKP *vedokta* and their Kṣatriya origin in the Pune all-Brahman meetings held at Tuḷsibāg.[58] Moreover he was the recipient of a land grant given to him in the village of Koḍil (yielding 80 Rupees) near Vai by Pratāpsiṃha.[59]

The day arrived when the tribunal had to announce the results of their deliberations (the *pañcāyat* results were traditionally presented as a consensus of opinion). Dongre dramatises the event by quoting an oral account narrated to him by his friend's father. It seems that thousands of Brahmans from Pune to Belgaum had gathered in Satara to hear the verdict. Fearing a major riot, Pratāpsiṃha with a drawn sword personally moved about restoring order.[60] Pratāpsiṃha may have anticipated results favouring the Kṣatriya origin of the Marathas. The 24 points (*siddhānta*) were established at the conclusion of the *pañcāyat* proceeding, each with the supporting evidence from the *śāstras*, and are elaborated in the *Siddhāntavijaya*.[61] The book is impressive in its depth of traditional scholarship relating to the *dharmaśāstra, Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. The genealogical details found there are interspersed with ancient land grants given by the kings to the Brahmans. However, the sole purpose of the work is to prove the legitimacy of the Kṣatriyahood of the Satara Maratha lineages and their rights to the *vedokta* and the three *karmas*. Ostensibly, the book was commissioned to prove the existence of the Kṣatriyas in the *kaliyuga*, but its real purpose was to prove beyond doubt the ancient solar and lunar linkages of the aristocratic Kṣatriya-Maratha families of Satara.

Pratāpsiṃha began mobilising the opinions of the Brahmans of the South from 1832 onwards. In that year he sent two Brahman emissaries, Āppācārya Kolhārkar and Vāsudevācārya Gajendragaḍkar (the bother of Rāghavācārya) to the courts of Mysore, Anagadi, Kocin, Tanjore and to other religious centres of

South India. The Brahmans in those places gave their signed consent acknowledging the Kṣatriyahood and three *karma* rights.[62]

The uneasy relationship between the Satara Kṣatriya-Marathas and the Brahmans of Maharashtra is indicated by the distrust felt by Pratāpsiṃha towards them. In his diary of November 16, 1830 he writes[63]:

> Nasik people have sent a Brahman to Haribā Mohite as he had requested a new one. Our *jñāti* is pure. We have indeed the support of the *śāstra* (*śāstrādhāra*) from the beginning, and our purity is an established fact according to the texts. Now that the Peshwas are gone, there is chaos. The Brahmans of this region cannot be trusted (*bharvasā yā mulukce brāhmaṇācā nāhī*). If a Karnataka or Hindusthani Brahman seeks a job with us, we should not object and give him the job (*nāhī na mhaṇtā deṇe*). He will act according to the traditional usage and would not distort the [ritual] and conduct it properly on his own. We have taken a good decision.

On July 1, 1834 Pratāpsiṃha refers to Śivānandaśāstrī's visit to Udaipur when he came back to Satara with proofs provided by the *śāstras* gathered from the Brahmans of that place and also the genealogical details (which proved the *vedokta* and Kṣatriya status). In another entry in the July 1, 1834 diary Pratāpsiṃha thanks the Rāṇā of Udaipur for receiving Śivānandaśāstī. He then writes about the conflict with the local Brahmans concerning the *karmas*. He requests the Rāṇā to send his trusted retainer Brahmans of Udaipur who can perform the Vedic *karmas* and other household rituals and who can read horoscopes and consult almanacs for the correct *muhurta* (auspicious dates and times). He also tells him that he has dispatched a party of people consisting of Sitalprasādśāstrī, the elder brother of Śivānandaśāstrī, Ābājī Rāje Śirke and Yesersingh.[64] Śivānandaśāstrī was sent to the Rāṇā with robes of honour and presents. The Rāṇā accepted the presents, thereby acknowledging Pratāpsiṃha formally as his Kṣatriya equal. Pratāpsiṃha was elated by this gesture of recognition and writes on April 4, 1835: "This gesture of Rāṇājī is a good thing. It will impress the Brahmans of Satara and Kolhapur."[65]

But Pratāpsiṃha, from time to time, had to face the disgruntled Brahmans of Pune. For the marriage of his daughter he invited several Brahmans of Pune who went to Satara and enjoyed the hospitality of the Maharaja. One Cintāmaṇ Dikṣīt Citpāvan, although invited, did not go. But he had the yearly *dakṣīṇā* allowance of the Pune Brahmans, given by the British, suspended. This was resumed at the intervention of Bālājīpant Nātu. The

Resident of Satara had to write to the Poona Collector to have the allowance reinstated.[66]

On July 7, 1835 we find Pratāpsiṃha brooding over the *vedokta karmas*. He was told by his priests that it was the tradition of the Udaipur Kṣatriyas to have their ritual performed according to the *Yajur* (*yajur vedokta*) *saṃhitā*, whereas in Satara the Brahmans were using the *Ṛgveda* (*Ṛgvedokta*). The priests showed their willingness to use the *Yajurveda* formulas if Pratāpsiṃha so wished. Pratāpsiṃha then in a reflective mood writes: "We do the *Vedic karmas* anyway. If it is decided to use the *Yajurveda*, we shall give up our present practice [of using *Ṛgvedic* formulas]." In the same letter when told that writing of the lineage trees of his family and those of his Kṣatriya-Maratha kin (*āpta*) families had been finalised, he interestingly comments: "This caste (*jāt*) is pure (*nirmal*) from the very beginning. Those who have violated the rules, have been thrown out [of the *jāt*]. This has now been demonstrated with the genealogical trees, therefore, no doubt should ever arise in our minds about the purity of our lineage."[67]

However, Pratāpsiṃha's notion of "pure line" Kṣatriyas seems to have been extended only to his Satara aristocratic network of intermarrying lineages (*āpt* or *śarir sambhandhī*). In his February 2, 1833 Diary he accuses the Gaikwad of Baroda's family of enticing members of his Kṣatriya-Maratha *jñāti* into marrying into Baroda lineages. He assigns the Gaikwad's family to a *kuṇbī jñāti* (peasants) and expresses his concern that the Gaikwad is engaged in an activity of converting the members of his *jñāti* to his own. He warns that the Gaikwad should not meddle in the affairs of other *jñāti*. He even asks the British government to intervene in these matters. He also describes the Śindes of Hindustan (north India) as *kuṇbīs*.[68] Pratāpsiṃha actually convened a meeting of the Kṣatriya-Marathas of Satara in which he ostracised Cimāpā Śirke of the Satara Kṣatriya-Maratha lineage, because he had a son married in the Gaikwad's family. Āpājī Mohite's son was engaged to a girl from the Gaikwad's *jñāti*, he too was threatened with excommunication. But he was given a chance that if he could break the engagement then he may be allowed back in the *jñāti*. In other cases he stopped the allowance the violators of the *jñāti* norms used to receive from the Raja's treasury.[69] The internal discipline was thus tightened to maintain the purity of Kṣatriya-Maratha lineages of Satara. It is significant to note that Pratāpsiṃha was acting here as a spokesman and the leader of his *jñāti*. Such actions are not the indication of

bigoted orthodoxy of Pratāpsiṃha as has been suggested[70], but are more likely a demonstration of the mechanism of maintaining caste discipline so common amongst the Hindus. Maintaining and sustaining the status and rank of the aristocratic lineages was the major issue here. This was in effect the strategy for keeping the "pure line" Kṣatriyas pure.

Besides Pratāpsiṃha's activist measures, there were other corporate decisions taken by Satara's Kṣatriya-Maratha Maṇḍaḷī. Śivānandaśāstrī, who used to regularly commute between Satara and Udaipur, returned in 1836 from a recent trip to Udaipur. The Kṣatriya-Marathas convened a series of meetings (from the documents we have, we are not sure if Pratāpsiṃha was present at those meetings) in 1836 to resolve the problem of accomodating the Northern Brahmans' ritual services and to discuss the question of maintaining their links with their reluctant hereditary Brahman priests of Satara. The lineages apparently still wanted to retain the services of the Satara Brahmans. They decided to pool their resources and jointly employ the Northern Brahmans and Gujarati Brahmans to perform their services for economic reasons and sustain at the same time the tenured service rights of their own Satara priests.[71] Evidently, they were not prepared as the CKPs were to make a complete break from the local Brahman services. Their approach is clear from one of the clauses of the resolution passed by their committee regarding this matter: "The Satara Brahmans should be invited to our rituals at the end of which the feeding of the Brahmans takes place. If they do not show up, we will feed the Northern and Gujarati Brahmans. Since the latter two are also Brahmans, the merit acquired by the act of feeding the Brahmans remains the same."[72] Pratāpsiṃha probably realised the importance of learning Sanskrit to break the monopoly of the Brahmans' control over the rituals. He opened a Pāṭhaśāḷā, the traditional centre for learning Sanskrit. If Ābā Pārasnīs, a CKP, could debate in Sanskrit, why not the other Kṣatriya boys. Not finding a Brahman to head the Sanskrit school, he appointed Ābā Pārasnīs to manage it.[73]

While Pratāpsiṃha and his *jñātī* were busy in the 1830s canvassing for their Kṣatriya identity and the *vedokta*, the Śaṅkarācārya who had maintained silence since 1827, now began to speak his mind. During the year Pratāpsiṃha assumed full responsibility as a ruler of Satara in 1830 and the year he convened

the tribunal, probably perceiving the changed political reality, the Śaṅkarācārya reversed his earlier stand by recognizing the CKPs *vedokta*. He lashed out in his November 26, 1830 decree at Cintāmaṇrāv Paṭvardhan and Bāḷājīpant Nātu for coercing him to commit perjury in his 1827 decree. The Śaṅkarācārya's letter also contains a retraction from his earlier statement that there were no Kṣatriyas in the *kaliyuga*. It seems clear from the letter which is about the CKPs *vedokta*, that he had Pratāpsiṃha and his *jñāti* in mind. He wanted to render his apologies to them. In clear reference to Pratāpsiṃha, although not mentioning his name, the Śaṅkarācārya's letter states[74]:

> The *Chatrapati sarkār* [a third person address for Pratāpsiṃha and his dynastic ancestors] has always been addressed with the title '*Kṣatriya Kulāvataṃsa*' by the Brahman *paṇḍits*, *śāstrīs* and other Brahmans of religious centres. But it was Cintāmaṇrāv who wanted to prove that the Kṣatriyas became extinct (*kṣetrī buḍāle*). But according to the *śāstras*, the Kṣatriyas do exist.

The Brahmans of Vai and Satara were evidently not deterred by the Śaṅkarācārya's decree. In 1831 we find the Brahmans sending a petition against Pratāpsiṃha to the Governor of Bombay, signed by 6000 Brahmans, complaining about the Maharaja's harassment of the Brahmans and accusing him of subverting their established religious privileges.[75]

In the year 1838, a year before he was deposed by the British, a royal consecration ceremony with a full *vedokta* paraphernalia was performed with the aid of a manual specially prepared for that occasion. This was the culminating point in Pratāpsiṃha's quest for his Kṣatriya identity.[76] The *vedokta* controversy between the Brahmans and the Marathas flared up again in 1901 in the reign of Chatraptī Śāhū Maharaja of Kolhapur. The issue there too was the Kṣatriyahood of the Marathas which was being denied to them by the Brahmans.[77]

Concluding Remarks

The *vedokta* disputes (1825–1838) reveal a complex interrelationship between the new political order established by the British in Maharashtra with their policy of non-interference in religious and caste issues, and the Brahmans' attempt to assert their ritual and social authority shorn of political support they had once enjoyed under the Brahman Peshwa rule. The Brahmans' desire

was to maintain the status quo with regard to their control of the *vedokta* rituals. We notice the defiant spirit of the CKP and the Kṣatriya-Marathas who wanted to take full advantage of the changing political and legal reality to enhance their *vedokta* with the three *karma* privileges.

The CKP and the Kṣatriya-Marathas were all resorting to the śāstric evidence to support their status as pure Kṣatriyas with the right to perform the three *karmas* with the *vedokta*. The response from each of the *jñātīs* was different when denied the *vedokta*. It depended on their ability to cope with the Brahman monopoly over the dispensation of the *Vedas*.

The CKP *jñātī* as a last resort opted openly for challenging the Brahmans' *vedokta* sanctions, by performing their own ritual acts such as the setting up of the fire by invoking the *Vedas*. Such an *agnihotri* act of Ciṭṇīs, the CKP spokesman, created a furor among the Brahmans of Satara. Ciṭṇīs calmly said that he was doing nothing new, but simply rekindling the fire which had once been installed by the Brahmans. Ciṭṇīs by then had clarified the issue with the Satara government, asking their guidelines regarding the course of actions he and his CKP *jñātī* might take if the Brahmans refused to perform the *vedokta* rituals for them. The Satara ruling dictated by the British was to tell the CKP to carry on with the rituals on their own if they wished on the "legal" principle that the *jñātīs* had the authority to define their norms.

The CKP could undertake the six functions (*ṣatkarma*) because they had the expertise to do so. Ābā Pārasnīs, the CKP, could easily hold his own and argue intricate points from the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and the *dharmaśāstra* in the debate which resulted in his composition of the *Śiddhāntavijaya* in Sanskrit. He prepared the *saṃskāra* manual (*karmakalpadruma*) which was published by Pratāpsiṃha.[78] The CKP as a caste were professional writers occupying important upper echelon bureaucratic positions in 17th and 18th century Maharashtra. The CKP as an educated elite, therefore, were a serious challenge to the Brahman monopoly of the *vedokta*.

It is important to note that the Brahmans were the ones who started the *vedokta* dispute against the CKP. They were divided on this issue themselves and had a hard time uniting in opposition to the CKPs *vedokta* claims. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī had just come out of the Devajña 1825 *vedokta* dispute.[79], and had learnt his lesson that the

British were not willing to take sides on the issue. The Brahman demonstrations, 10,000 strong, at the Tandulvadi *jatrā*, before the Governor of Bombay, Malcolm, failed to achieve their aim of stopping both Pratāpsiṃha and the CKP from undertaking the *vedokta* acts. The petition condemning the "unrighteous" rule of Pratāpsiṃha signed by 6000 Brahmans fell on deaf ears. The British simply had resolved to sustain their policy of religious neutrality. The Gaikwad's government ignored their *dhāraṇa* (sitins), their fasting for four days and their temporary cessation of administrative work in the government offices. The Gaikwad and his powerful CKP ministers with the tacit approval of the British would not endorse the Brahman demands for imposing sanctions on the CKPs' *vedokta*. On the other hand, in 1789 Pune, the Brahmans had successfully tried a *dhāraṇa* and had Brahman staff removed from the CKP houses. Eventually, the Brahmans methods led to confrontation and full scale riots in Pune resulting in the suspension of the *vedokta* for the CKP. The chief administrators in Pune in 1789 were the Brahmans like Nānā Phaḍṇīs, Tātyā Phaḍke and Āpā Baḷvant (not to speak of the Peshwa who himself was a Brahman); the latter two were military commanders, and they were the ones who had instigated the Brahmans to agitate against the CKPs' *vedokta*.[80]

At Satara in the 1820s and 1830s, the Brahmans were unable to stop the CKPs' *vedokta* because of the CKPs' political clout at the royal court and the strong backing of Pratāpsiṃha (and indirectly the British) who had his own *vedokta* compromised by the Brahmans. The CKP *jñāti* in the 1820s dispute organized a well orchestrated joint intra-regional resistance against the Brahmans. The letter of Ciṭṇīs to his *jñāti* fellows demonstrates the extent of the network of control. The implied and actual threat of ostracism (*bahiṣkāra*) of the CKP *jñāti* member who refused to abide by the *jñāti* resolution, could enforce its corporate decision. In 1789–90 also we encounter a corporate stand offered by the Pune CKPs against the Brahmans. Ciṭṇīs in Satara in that dispute was kept informed of the events in Pune.[81] In the 1825 Baroda dispute, the CKP leaders of Baroda were willing to accept the rulings of their spokesmen in Satara. The Śaṅkarācārya's letter of January 1827 was jointly addressed to the CKPs from Baroda and Satara.

The Satara Kṣatriya-Maratha case is unusual in that the head of the state, Maharaja Pratāpsiṃha, was actively engaged in striving for the *vedokta* and Kṣatriya status for himself and his *jñāti*. The

Kṣatriya-Marathas did not wish to dispense with the services of their Brahman priests, since they had no intentions of performing the *vedokta* on their own. There was enough Brahman support which could be mustered for it. Pratāpsiṃha in fact mandated a conference, and the consent for the *vedokta* was obtained from the Brahmans of the North and South. The antiquity of the Kṣatriya-Maratha lineages' solar and lunar connections was established. The *Siddhāntavijaya* contains the "ancient" genealogies of the lineages with full *gotras* and *pravarās*. If the Brahmans of Satara, Vai and Mahuli and Pune were reluctant participants who could not be trusted to carry on with the *vedokta* services, then more obliging Karnataka and Hindustani Brahmans would be employed. Śivānandaśāstrī was on a mission to recruit the Brahmans of the North. Thus, the Kṣatriya-Marathas were creating a counterpoise to the Maharashtrian Brahman monopoly over the *vedokta*.

Finally, the paper indicates that the evidence of the *śāstras* could not be overruled but circumvented by the Brahmans holding debates and giving differing interpretations of the *śāstras*. Rāghavācārya, Vajraṭakaśāstrī and the Śaṅkarācārya supported the CKPs *vedokta* and argued in its favour because they felt they had enough śāstric proofs. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī too used the *śāstras* to support his views for prohibition of *vedokta* for the CKP. But Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī was able to generate successfully a Brahman consensus to support his view point. The differing interpretation of the *śāstras* is illustrated by the texts cited as proofs by the Brahmans. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī in his 1827 letter to the Brahmans of Mahuli cites in support of the Śūdra status of the CKP, works like the *Bṛhadjātivevka* of Hemādrī and Mādhava, the *Śūdrakamalākara*, the *Kāyasthadharmapradīpa*. He cites the *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* together with their commentaries to prove the non-existence of the Kṣatriyas in the *kaliyuga*.[82] The Śaṅkarācārya in his 1827 and November 1830 letters cites the "śāstric" support (*śāstrānusāra*) for the Kṣatriyahood of the CKP: *Kāyasthadharmapradīpa*; Govindabhaṭṭa's, *Govindabhaṭṭī;* Kamalākarabhaṭṭa's *Śūdrakamalākara* and *Jātiviveka*. His trump card is the *Reṇukāmāhatmya* of the *Skandapurāṇa* where the CKP are explicitly referred to as the *Cāndrasenīya Kṣatriyas* with a Dālabhyagotra.[83] Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī interestingly avoids mentioning the *Skandapurāṇa* evidence. He obviously does not cite the Brahman awards of 1779, 1796 and 1801, granting the *vedokta* to the CKP, and which were cited by the Śaṅkarācārya.[84] Thus in the śāstric debate two options were

available to decide on the CKPs' *vedokta*, but these options were based on the same *śāstras* or the other set of *śāstras*. In the Pune case the opinion of the learned (*śiṣṭas*) prevailed to deny the *vedokta* to the CKPs. But the fluidity in the interpretation of the *śāstras* can reconcile the positions which on the face of it cannot be reconciled. The Śaṅkarācārya himself used this śāstric position to his advantage. Initially in January 1827 he came out in favour of the CKPs' *vedokta*, he reversed his position in an October 1827 decree and once again reverted to his original position in 1830. Apparently, the Śaṅkarācārya did endorse a decree which went against his conscience.[85] But as the Brahmans' *guru* probably he had to endorse the collective judgement of the Brahman *śāstrīs* under pressure, as he later admits. The Śaṅkarācārya may have lost a bit of moral stature in the Brahman and the CKP community due to his vacillation, but his dharmaśāstric stance can be construed as correct. Whether his writs had any clout with the Brahmans and non-Brahmans of Maharashtra is an open question.

Notes

[1]For the term *vedokta* and the cases involving the *vedokta* disputes see N.K. Wagle, "The Cāndraseniya Kāyastha Prabhus and the Brahmans: Ritual, Law and Politics in Pune 1789–90," in *Indology and Law: Studies in Honour of Professor J. Duncan M. Derrett* , eds. Günther D. Sontheimer and P.K. Aithal (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 303-04, 305-28; see also N.K. Wagle, "A Dispute between the Pancal Devajna Sonars and the Brahmans of Pune regarding Social Rank and Ritual Privilege: A Case Study of the British Administration of Jati Laws in Maharashtra," in *Images of Maharashtra: A Regional Profile of India* , ed. N.K. Wagle (London, 1980), pp. 129-59.

[2]See Wagle, "British Administration of Jati Laws", p. 134; Wagle, "Ritual, Law and Politics," p. 320, the CKPs were forced to concede nine points. The details are also found in the Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay Judicial Department (Bom JD), volume 5, 62, pp. 118-20. Fasting, refusal of services to the patrons and ostracism of the fellow Brahmans who performed the services were the usual methods of enforcement of violation of the codes. In 1789 Pune *vedokta* riots, for instance, Nāro Mahādev's (a CKP) sacred thread was torn apart and his loin cloth removed, see Wagle, "Ritual, Law and Politics," pp. 311, 316. The Brahmans at Baroda also gave a list of twenty-one prohibited acts for the CKP, see Bom JD, 7, 87, pp. 102-03 (1825).

[3]See M.S.A. Rao, "Themes in the Ideology of Protest Movements," in *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization* ed. S.C. Malik (Simla, 1977), pp. 56-64 for a theoretical construct of an ideology of protest movement in India. Rao says that the "protest movements in pre-British India were largely characterized by their concern with religious beliefs and practices, as those constituted the chief area of relative deprivation." (p. 59) For the Marathi "protest" literature based on the CKPs' *vedokta*, the two major studies are Keśav Sitārām Ṭhākre, *Grāmaṇyāṃcā saddyant itihās arthāt nokar śāhīce baṇḍa* (Bombay, 1919) and Keśav Trimbak Gupte, *Rājvāḍyāṃcī Gāgābhaṭṭī* (Pune, 1919).

[4]Wagle, "Ritual, Law and Politics," pp. 303-28.

[5]The date March 13, 1824 appears in the letter sent by Pune Brahmans to the Brahmans of Mahuli, advising the latter to prohibit the *vedokta* for the CKPs. For the letter, see Mahādev Gaṇeś Ḍongre, ed. *Śrī Siddhāntavijayagrantha athavā Marathyāṃcyā itihāsācyā sādhanāt navīn bhar* [*Siddhānt v.*] (Kolhapur, 1906), *pariśiṣṭa* [*pari.*] 6, p. 108. Ḍongre's book is a collection of original documents found in the archives of the Maharaja of Satara's family. Ḍongre divides the book in two parts: a) *Siddhāntavijaya* in full Sanskrit text and Marathi translation (pp. 1-221), and b) part two is presented as *pariśiṣṭa*, appendix, with eleven sections (pp. 1-151). The *Siddhāntavijaya* was composed

by Ābā Pārasnīs most probably in 1833. By 1838 he was recognized as the author of the book.

[6]Wagle, "British Administration of Jati Laws," pp. 132-47.

[7]Governor in Council to Chaplin, July 6, 1824, Bom JD, 5, 62, pp. 137-41.

[8]See Hiroshi Fukazawa, "State and Caste System in the 18th Century Maratha Kingdom," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, vol. 9, no. 1 (June, 1968), pp. 32-43; Wagle, "British Administration of Jati Laws," (1980), p. 148.

[9]Governor in Council to Chaplin, July 6, 1824, Bom JD, 5, 62, p. 140.

[10]See K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1818-30* (London, 1957), p. 87; Wagle, "British Administration of Jati Laws," pp. 141-47. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's son was married to the daughter of Bāḷājīpant Nātu. Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī was originally from Vai and was attached to the Satara court along with Nātu.

[11]G.S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas* , volume 3 (Bombay, 1968), p. 510.

[12]Trimbak Vāsudev Gupte, *Cāndraseniya Kāyastha Prabhu grāmaṇya prakaraṇātīl pāc assal ājñāpatre* (Pune, 1914), appendix, pp. 1-21; K.T. Gupte, *Rājvādyāṃcī Gāgābhaṭṭī*, appendix 4, pp. 1-21. The Śaṅkarācārya's letter contains three documents which he produces verbatum, two from Banaras Brahmans (1779, 1801) proving the CKPs' *vedokta*, and one Pune Brahman award ratified by Bājīrāv II in 1796. Bājīrāv's circular ordering the Brahmans of the religious centres to allow the *vedokta* for the CKP appears in G.S. Vāḍ, ed. *Selections from the Satara Raja and the Peshwa Diaries, Bajirao II*, vol. 5 (Poona, 1908), pp. 251-52.

[13]For Nilkaṇṭhaśāstrī's reporting of the event see the *Siddhāntavijaya* (*Siddhānt v.*), *pariśiṣṭa* (*pari.*) 6, pp. 108-09. He writes, " Many Brahmans, who had received money from the Parabhus became repentant and asked forgiveness from the *jñāti*. Taking the *prāyaścitta* they wrote that the Prabhus bribed them to write that according to the *śāstras* they have the right to the *vedic karmas*." Cintāmaṇ Pāṇḍurang Paṭvardhan too (*Siddhānt. v., pari.* 6, 107) repeats similar charges. The "pretender" Śaṅkarācārya's letter to Elphinstone in 1825 Baroda also accuses the CKP of bribing the Brahmans, see Bom JD, 7, 87, pp. 101.

[14]*Siddhānt v., pari.* 6, pp. 109-110. Citṇīs knew of this letter as he states in his 1827 Satara resolution (*ibid.* p. 111).

[15]T.V. Gupte, *Assal patre*, pp. 13-14.

[16]*Siddhānt v., pari.* 6, p. 107.

[17]*Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.

[18]Gupte, *Assal patre*, p. 1.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

[20] Bom J.D., 7, 87, pp. 71-72.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-83.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

[25] Gāgābhaṭṭa was the author of *Kāyasthadharmapradīpa* which allowed the CKPs' *vedokta*. For an analysis of the contents of the book, see K.T. Gupte, *Rājvāḍyāṃcī Gāgābhaṭṭī*.

[26] Bom JD, 7, pp.87-88.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-92.

[30] Bāḷakṛṣṇa Sakhārām Kulkarṇi, ed. *Cāndraseniya Kāyastha Prabhuṃcyā grāmaṇyaṃcī saṃkṣipta māhitī va āj̃ñāpatre* (Bombay, 1920), pp. 35-36.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

[32] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 108-09.

[33] Gupte, *Assal patre*, p. 14.

[34] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 108-09.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 107-08.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 107: *alikaḍe Parabhu āplā j̃ñātīdharma soḍūn vedakarma karṇyāvisī brāhmaṇās lobhaviśṭa karitāt teṃvhā tyās śikṣā karūn bandobast vhāvā je brāhmaṇa tyāṃce ghari vedokta karma kartīl tyās bahiṣkṛta karāve taṃṭe hoūn mārāmāryā hotāt tyācā bandobast vhāvā nāhītar kāhī brāhmaṇa martil bandobast jālā mhaṇje āmhī jayajaykār karu te mahārājās śreyaskar*

[37] *Ibid.*, the letter is addressed to the Brahmans of Mahuli, which is a suburb of Satara about four miles from the city proper.

[38] Raghunāthrāv Govindrāv Rāṇe, *Sātārce Chatrapatī Pratāpsiṃha Mahārājā arthāt satyāsāṭhī atmāhutī deṇārā marāṭhā rāj puruṣ* (Satara, 1929), pp. 135-36.

[39] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 110-12.

[40] Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha Mahārāja* p. 137.

[41] *Ibid.: purvavat pramāṇe brāhmaṇa yeūn na karīt tarī j̃ñātī dharmāt jyāce te mukhtyār sarkār dakkhal karīt nāhī tyās tuṃhī brāhmaṇā śivāya āple j̃ñātīcā*

bandobast karmānisī ṭheūn cālavile astā manāī va madat nāhī kumpaṇī sarkārātūnahī yā sarkārāt sadarhū pramāṇe jābtā ālā āhe

[42] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 112-13.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 113: ***sarvānī yek sārikhe vāgle pāhije jñātīce kām yekānī yek oḍhṇe karṇe na vhāve***

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 114: ***brāhmaṇa āmace garbhādānādī saṃskāra purvavata vedokta cālvīt nāhīt va cālū det nāhīt navīn grantha racanā karitāt āmhī nehmī pramaṇe jo agnī siddha kela āhe toc ṭhevilā āhe yāt kāhī navīn prakār nāhī teṃuhā svāmīnī caukaśī karūn nikāl lāvāvā kārtika śuddha 1, śake 1750 sarvadhārī nāma saṃvatsare***

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.

[47] *Siddhānt v.*, p. 7 (Introduction).

[48] *Siddhānt v.*, 6, pp. 158-59. The seven lineages (*sapta kuḷī*) of the Kṣatriya-Marathas, claiming descent from either the *suryavaṃśa* (solar line) or *somavaṃśa* (lunar line) are Bhosle (Śivājī's line), Śirke, Mohite (Cauhāṇ), Mahāḍik (Hāḍe), Pālkar, Gurjar (Pavār) and Ahirrāv. Four additional *kuḷās* are incorporated, according to the *Siddhāntavijaya*, in the Satara network: Jādhav, Ghāṭge, Niṃbāḷkar and Ghorpaḍe (*Siddhānt v. pari.* 1, pp. 12-14). Three further names are found in the *Siddhāntavijaya*: Śelār, Māne and More (*Siddhānt v. pari.* 7, pp. 116-17). Thus even in the 1830s, the Satara list of Kṣatriya-Marathas was extended to include important Maratha aristocratic families.

[49] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 5, pp. 102-03.

[50] *Siddhānt v.*, pp. 14-15 (Introduction).

[51] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 5, pp. 102-03.

[52] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 76.

[53] *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar (SPD)*, vol. 42, "Papers Referring to Pratasinh, Raja of Satara," ed. G.S. Sardesai (Bombay, 1934), p. 51. This letter was written on October 3, 1822.

[54] Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha*, pp. 216.

[55] *SPD*, 42, pp. 18-20.

[56] *Siddhānt v.* p. 10 (Introduction).

[57] Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha*, pp. 217-18.

[58] Gupte, *Assal patre*, p. 2.

[59] *Siddhānt. v.* 5, pp. 114-15.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 10 (Introduction). Ḍongre heard this eyewitness account from one Govind Karkhānīs, the father of Dattātreya Govind Karkhānīs, a resident of Satara.

[61] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 1, pp. 1-16.

[62] *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 17-54. Appendix 2 contains an exhaustive listing of the original Sanskrit letters and the Brahman signatures. All these letters were preserved in the Satara Maharajas' Archives, from where they were copied by Ḍongre, the editor of the *Siddhāntavijaya*.

[63] *SPD*, 42, p. 59.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp 76-77.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 86. The diary date is January 1, 1835.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 67. The diary date is February 5, 1833.

[70] *Ibid.* The editorial comments are included in the four line English summary of the document.

[71] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 7, pp. 116-18.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[73] Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha*, p. 121.

[74] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 114-15.

[75] Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha*, p. 223.

[76] *Siddhānt v.*, pp. 15-16 (Introduction); Rāṇe, *Pratāpsiṃha*, p. 225; Govind Sakhārām Sardesāī, *Marāṭhī Riyāsat uttar vibhāg*, part 3 (Bombay, 1932), p. 603.

[77] See Chandra Y. Mudaliar, "The Non-Brahman Movement in Kolhapur," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 15, no.l, pp. 11-12.

[78] *Siddhānt v.*, p. 10 (Introduction). The text was printed in Satara with a run of sixty-two copies.

[79] See Wagle, "British Administration of Jati Laws," pp. 129-59.

[80] See Wagle, "Ritual, Law and Politics," pp. 303-28.

[81] *Ibid.* The information of the Pune dispute was regularly sent to Ciṭṇīs at Satara for his advice.

[82] *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, p. 109.

[83]Gupte, *Assal patre*, pp. 1-21.

[84]*Ibid.*

[85]See *Siddhānt v. pari.* 6, pp. 114-15. He confesses his troubled conscience in the letter to the Brahmans.

Appendix

Cāndraseniya Kāyastha Prabhu Jñāti's Satara Resolution of June 5, 1827

The Brahmans have been lately performing all the sixteen *saṃskāras*, the *śrāddha* and all other rituals for our *jñāti* according to the *vedokta* to which we are entitled as recipients of the three *karmas* (*tṛya karmādhikār paṇe*). But the Brahmans repeatedly initiate disputes (*taṃṭe bakheḍe*) concerning these rights. They ridicule us, make insulting remarks and disgrace us. On the one hand full of obsequiousness and with sweet tongue, they perform all the *karmas* for us on their own. On the other hand, they quarrel with each other [over this matter] and divide against themselves. Full of swagger, one side proclaims that we have the right to the three *karmas* , the other side denies the same. They behave in this unpredictable manner (*tarhā karāvī*).

The letters and the official documents from Bāḷājī Bājīrāv [1740–61] onwards routinely refer to us as 'Prabhus' [the caste name]; the Brahmas in their latest petitions (*yādī*) have used the term 'Parabhu' [a derisive term meaning 'of foreign and strange birth']. We have the letters of agreement (*saṃmat*) signed by the 80 Brahmans of Banaras [an 1801 docuemnt] and we possess the duly signed and authenticated warrant (*sanad*) of Bājīrāv II [1795-1818] sustaining our [*vedokta*] practices. Despite this the Brahmans have again started a dispute with us. They have been holding meetings in Pune in places like Tuḷsībāg, making licentious speeches, ridiculing us and maligning us. They do not care about our honour (*abrū*) while engaged in such activities. They do not think about people's innermost urge to preserve honour. In thousands they gather and create commotions. Their sending letters [to the other Brahman communities in Maharashtra] has resulted in a major obstacle for us in conducting the three *karmas*.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya [of Karvir], the *svāmī* of the Brahmans, gave his sealed and signed letter to Rāghavācārya, stating affirmatively that the dispute [initiated by the Brahmans] was groundless and we had the right (*adhikār*) to the three *karmas*. But nothing came out of it. The [Brahmans] came to a mutual understanding and supported each other [against us]. We have seen this happening far too many times.

The dispute came to a head at Mahābaḷeśvar at the *śrāddha* ceremony. We had to do that ritual on our own [the Brahmans having refused to do so]. Without any doubt, day by day, we have come to a realisation that the Brahmans are determined to oppress us. Maliciously, with unjust means, they are endeavouring to ruin our *jñāti* (*jñātīc buḍvāvī*) totally. The sacrificial fire kindled by the Brahmans (*agnī siddha kartāt*) for such rituals as *garbhādhān* and *āṣṭamāṅgalya* [the rite performed after the eight months of gestation period] can remain unextinguished and used [for the other *saṃskāras*]. But keeping the

sacred fire alive is a bothersome effort. But now is the time to maintain it perpetually [i.e., to perform vedic *agnihotra* rite]. Those [Brahmans] who wish to continue performing the three *karmas* including the sixteen *saṃskāras* and the *śraddha* according to the *vedokta* may still negotiate with us to do so and to end this wrangling. Instsead of allowing that to happen the Brahmans organised meetings [against us] and roughed up and ostracised (*bahiṣkāra*) the Brahmans who came [to offer their services] to us. They issued proclamations and made speeches that no Brahman should perform sacrificial rites and ceremonies for us, and that any one found doing so was to be ostracised. Because the Brahmans have stopped their services, the performances of the rites have come to a stand-still. We are at full liberty (*mukhtyār*), therefore, to make the necessary arrangements for our *jñāti* in the absence of the Brahmans. There is no harm done in undertaking the three *karma* on our own to which we are entitled to, and which were performed for us [previously by the Brahmans].

In Puṇe these days Brahmans are also engaged in deriding and ridiculing each other [on account of our *vedokta* rights]. We know what to expect from such confrontations [i.e., nothing will come out of it] and they will make a common cause against us in the end. The *Mahārājā* [Pratāpsiṃha of Satara] and the *Cumpanī Sarkār* [East India Company] should secure for us a document of agreement from the religious centres (*kṣetrokṣetrācī saṃmate*) stating that we be allowed to sustain our past practices of the performances of the three *karmas*, sixteen *saṃskāras* and the *śrāddha* according to the *vedokta*. The agreement should further state that any Brahman opposed to the performances of these rituals would be liable for ostracism. That letter should be properly countersigned and stamped with the seal of the *Mahārājā*. When such an agreement is enacted, only then shall we put a stop to our newly started activities [i.e., performance of the three *karmas* according to the *vedokta* on our own]. We also expect them not to initiate [*vedokta* disputes] again.

Instead of ending the dispute, they are actively engaged in furthering it. They ignore our needs and are set on disgracing and insulting us. Because of their nefarious activities, we no longer require their services. We are free (*mukhtyār*) to continue, for our *jñāti*, the *karmas* and whatever else we want without the Brahmans. We can even execute easily all the six *karmas* (*ṣaṭkarma*) for our *jñāti*. They tell us we are innovating things (*he navīn kartāt*). But the Brahmans themselves, giving up their own *karma*, are following those of others.

Brahman castes (*jñāti*) are respected by all and are a refuge to all. Keeping all satisfied, they should maintain proper order [in society] (*vājavī cālvāve*). But they act quite to the contrary. Deviating from their own *dharma* (*āplā dharma soḍun karitāt*), they have assumed the *karmas* of the three *varṇas*. They have taken up arms, the *karma* of the Kṣatriyas. Bhārgavarām [Paraśurām] forced us to abandon our weapons and to accept the writer's profession (*lekhan vṛttī*) for the sake of our livelihood (*upajīvikā*). They are engaged in that profession too, and thus have been ruining our livelihood. They

are engaged in the *karma* of the Vaiśyas in such enterprises as agriculture, setting up of shops, business and banking (*vyāj vaṭā*). They have even taken up the *karma* of the Śūdras. They become common foot soldiers (*pyāde*) and wear their headgear (*pāgoṭī*). They are engaged in low occupations becoming servants and attendents of others. Thus they encroach on others' livelihoods, needed for maintaining households. They accept gifts (*inām*) of lands, etc. as *bhaṭs* and convert these endowments into permanent hereditary holdings. They are occupied in regular employment and in business. Yet they resent when addressed by the epithet *bhaṭ*, they would rather others address them as *pant* [abbreviated form of *paṇḍit*] or with their titles as holders of public office (*darakdār*). They have made paupers out of the three castes (*jñāti*) and even of others. They teach very low class prostitutes (*atinīc kasbiṇīs*) *lāvaṇīs* [erotic dance songs] and accompany them with music and songs and indulge in such activities. Yet they assert their authority to question the chanting [of the *Vedas* during our rituals] and they ostracised those who do. Instead of chastising those Brahmans who are not performing the *karmas* incumbent on them, they say to us, 'the sacrificial fires which had been kindled by the Brahmans for you should be extinguished. You may install new ones after a lapse of eight days.' But why should we discontinue the sacrificial fire set up by the Brahmans? Before it they themselves had been performing our *muñjī* [sacred thread], marriage and other rituals. Why should we be released from the services the Brahmans had executed for us? They become non-plussed with our rebuttal.

Without any scruple they oppress by various means the helpless *jñātīs* like us, and many others too. They are not forthright in justifying their actions. Employing devious means, they are engaged in scoffing at us. Their intention is to harass us continually. One should try to maintain impartiality while deciding right from wrong, and put blame where it is due. Only by putting aside malice and jealousy, can one come to a true understanding of the issue at hand (the *vedokta* issue). They say, 'Now that the ritual services have been stopped, how will they manage to get them performed?' They themselves have shown the way to some *jñātīs*. We all know how the Nhāvīs of Puṇtāmbe fared in these matters. What then should we do when confronted with oppression? Ignoring totally the well-documented rights of our *jñāti*, the Brahmans have played foul (*Brāhmaṇānīkele he phārac ānucit*). But we must be careful not to be swayed by their action and to act with prejudiced mind. Despite the Brahman determination not to perform the rituals for us, we will carry on with our *karma*, as these were done before, without them.

We should accept the services of the Brahmans who would willingly fulfill our need and who would not succumb to the threats of ostracism made by the Brahmans. The Brahman, who does not say 'save me' [from the other Brahman] and who, on his own accord, comes to our homes and performs the *karmas* thoroughly according to the *vedokta*, should be allowed to come without any obstruction, and the work should be done through him. At the same time, we

should not invite a Brahman to perform our *karmas* if we cannot offer him our protection. Neither should he be brought under false pretext nor if his coming to our home meant causing harm to his family.

We should execute the *karmas* as we know them best (*karma yathājñāne*). The *Sarkār* (the Satara government) should be informed of our resolution and permission sought from them [to allow us to institute our new arrangement]. Not caring for the Brahman obstruction, we should perform on our own the *vedokta* rights to the three *karma*: of procuring the sacrifice, studying the *Vedas* and giving gifts, because the Brahmans have stopped coming to us for their performance. We already have the rights to these three *karmas* out of the six (*ṣaṭkarma*). We have now to assume three new *karmas*: performing the sacrifices for others, teaching others and receiving the gifts for services rendered. But these new *karmas* will be performed for our *jñāti* only. None of us will go to other *jñātis* to perform their *karmas* and accept gifts from them in return for services rendered. This resolution has been approved unanimously and any member who does not abide by it shall be kept out of the *jñāti* (*jñāti bāhya*).
Śāhūnagar, Fort Sātārā, June 5, 1827

Source: *Siddhāntavijaya, Pariśiṣṭa* 6, pp. 110-12

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